

# BAFFLING THE BLOCKADE



J. MACDONALD OXLEY



Jones

147

d

N.S. - mother  
2 Toy - see book

RB223,002



**Library  
of the  
University of Toronto**

# BAFFLING THE BLOCKADE

BY

J. MACDONALD OXLEY

*Author of "Diamond Rock," "Up Among the Ice-Floes,"*

*"In the Wilds of the West Coast,"*

*&c. &c.*



T. NELSON AND SONS

*London, Edinburgh, and New York*

---

1897



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2015

<https://archive.org/details/bafflingblockade00oxle>

## CONTENTS.



I. A BLOCKADED PORT, ....	9
II. FITTING UP THE "FLAMINGO," ....	26
III. RUNNING THE BLOCKADE, ....	43
IV. A SUCCESSFUL STRATEGY, ....	60
V. THE BLOCKADE-RUNNERS' RENDEZVOUS, ....	75
VI. THE EXCHANGE TO THE "GREYHOUND," ....	92
VII. THE RUN ACROSS, ....	108
VIII. SAFE INTO PORT, ....	124
IX. THE NAVAL ATTACK ON CHARLESTON, ....	140
X. A HOT PURSUIT, ....	155
XI. NASSAU ONCE MORE, ....	169
XII. A TRIP TO CUBA, ....	185
XIII. AT THE MERCY OF THE STORM, ....	200
XIV. CAST AWAY, ....	213
XV. IN OPEN BOATS, ....	228
XVI. FEVER-SMITTEN, . . .	241

XVII. AN UNEXPECTED MEETING,	....	....	254
XVIII. BEFORE THE STIPENDIARY,	....	...	267
XIX. IN TWOFOLD PERIL,	....	....	281
XX. A STERN CHASE, ....	....	....	295
XXI. A BERMUDA HOLIDAY,	....	....	309
XXII. CAPTURED AT LAST,	....	....	323
XXIII. THE DASH TO CHARLESTON,	....	....	336
XXIV. A CLOSE SHAVE, ....	....	....	348
XXV. FOR THE LAST TIME,	....	....	362

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.



“THE BOAT BEGAN TO PAY-OFF, AND BOTH HELD ON FOR DEAR LIFE,”	....	....	<i>Frontispiece.</i>
“TANK YOU FOR YOUR NICE PRESENT, MISS,”	....		82
“A HOT PURSUIT—CHASED BY A FEDERAL CRUISER,”			168
“HE GRASPED VICTOR, AND RUSHING BACK DROPPED HIM UPON THE BEACH,”	....	....	217
“BECALMED IN OPEN BOATS UNDER A BLAZING SUN,”			234
“A GREAT SPLINTER OF WOOD TORN FROM THE BUL- WARKS STRUCK HIM FULL ON THE SHOULDER,”			354



# BAFFLING THE BLOCKADE.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### A BLOCKADED PORT.

THE hand of war lay heavily upon the Southern States. The conflict between North and South was at its height, and the rich fair land had become one vast battle-ground, over which armies marched and counter-marched, or engaged in bloody conflict.

In the country the farms and plantations, left by the men to the care of the women and children, were being but very inadequately tilled, or were altogether going to waste; while in the city the warehouses were empty of goods, the offices deserted of clerks, and the wharves vacant of ships.

Every man fit to bear arms in the field that could possibly leave home was serving in the army, risking

life day by day in the face of bullets and bayonets, or, what were even more deadly, fever and famine.

The Northern armies had invested the South by land, and the Northern navies had blockaded her ports by sea, so completely that all regular communication with the outside world was cut off. That great group of states, with their millions of people, was practically in the position of a besieged city. Only some wonderful series of victories could effect their deliverance. Failing this, they must simply endure as bravely as they might until starved into surrender.

By general consent the rest of the world remained mere spectators of the struggle. "Hands off! Let them fight it out between themselves!" the great powers of Europe had said warningly to one another; and piteous and awful as was this strife of brother in blue against brother in grey, they could hardly have done otherwise.

For England or France to have taken sides, and to have actively interfered, would only have fearfully aggravated the calamity. It would have set Christendom ablaze, and stayed the progress of the world for a century.

Yet England at least had far more than a senti-

mental interest in this civil war. From the Southern States previous to the outbreak of hostilities had come the chief supply of cotton for the world, and England was then even more than now the chief seat of the cotton-spinning industry.

The blockading of the Atlantic ports of the Southern States meant not only that the English manufactures which had there enjoyed so profitable a market were shut out, but that the cotton upon which the looms of Lancashire depended was shut in. Thus it came to pass ere long that the "cotton famine," as it was called, caused as much suffering in parts of England as the war did in the States of the South. The mills were idle, the operatives were without wages, and starvation could only be kept off by charity on a tremendous scale.

It was this woful state of affairs no doubt which had much to do with the prevalence of sympathy for the South among the people of England. They wanted the South to win, so that cotton might once more come plentifully to their mills.

In the meantime, millions of bales were piling up along the Atlantic coast, or accumulating upon the plantations, while the people to whom they belonged were in sore need of the very articles that England

and other nations would have been so glad to supply in exchange.

Among the mercantile houses devoted to the cotton business in Charleston, South Carolina, that of John Sinclair's Sons held an honourable place. The founder of the firm had long since passed away after a prosperous career, and the "Sons," two men in the prime of life, had worthily upheld the fortunes of the concern, so that when the war broke out they were rightly regarded as very wealthy.

With handsome residences in the city and extensive plantations in the country, with children growing up around them amidst all the luxuries that abundant possessions could afford, the lines of the Sinclair brothers certainly seemed to have fallen to them in pleasant places.

But the war wrought a woful change. John Sinclair, the elder brother, responding to his country's call, took command of a cavalry regiment recruited from the *élite* of Charleston, and went into the thick of the struggle. Robert, the younger, incapacitated for military service by a club-foot which made him a partial cripple, had to remain at home, where he chafed bitterly against his enforced inaction.

The blockading of the port by the Federal cruisers

did not take long to bring the prosperous business to a standstill, and in the beautiful homes where such happiness and comfort had flourished many deprivations had to be endured.

To both brothers had come a goodly number of children. In John's family there were four fine boys and three lovely girls, while Robert could boast of two sturdy sons and a charming quartette of daughters.

Very dark and heavy was the cloud cast upon these young people by the war. In the family of the elder brother there was constant anxiety for the safety of the cavalry colonel, of whose brave doings reports from time to time came to fill them with loving pride.

At Robert's home the deep dejection of the head of the house threw a shadow over the others. Compelled to be a mere spectator of the conflict, and at the same time to witness the rapid decline of the splendid business he had inherited and helped to extend, his heart was filled with bitterness.

As for the young people, of course they could not be expected to take things so seriously as their elders. The many discomforts that now fell to their lot they bore with admirable cheerfulness, making the best of their altered circumstances, and not adding to their parents' burden of trouble by vain repinings.

The two eldest boys in the two families were especial friends, despite differences of disposition and temperament that made them almost the opposites of each other.

Victor, Robert's son, belonged distinctly to the Southern type. He was tall and rather slight of figure, sallow of skin, and had hair and eyes as black as a raven's. Beneath a cool and indifferent manner that sometimes took on a disdainful tone, he hid a temper capable of violent outbursts.

But to these he rarely gave way. He had more than a touch of knightly dignity in his nature, and looked upon any undue exhibition of temper as something of which to be ashamed. His sensitive pride shrank even from his own disapproval, and his constant endeavour to avoid such self-judgment gave him an air of restraint that prevented his being popular among his fellows.

"Victor's a regular iceberg!" said one of them indignantly, on an occasion when he thought more emotion ought to have been shown; and the phrase pretty accurately expressed the general opinion concerning him.

But he was an iceberg with a volcano hidden in his heart, if such a mixed metaphor may be permitted.

His feelings were really as keen as those of the very ones who most misunderstood him, and that he should prefer to keep them to himself was, as he conceived, entirely his own business.

His cousin Ernest, on the other hand, took a very easy, good-humoured view of life. When he was in an amiable frame of mind, and that was his normal condition, the fact was patent to everybody; and when his temper was up, he made no pretence of disguising his irritation.

It was ever so much less trouble to speak or to act according to your impulse, Ernest argued, than to stop short to consider just what ought to be done.

Easily moved to laughter or to tears; quick to respond to a challenge to play or to fight; slow to suspect evil of any one; determined to have as good a time as possible, and willing for everybody else to share in it, Ernest could not fail to be beloved by his friends, and to have very few enemies.

In appearance he was so unlike the other boys about him that he seemed to belong to some different race. Of the same height as his cousin, he had a breadth of shoulder and depth of chest that stood in marked contrast to the other's slimness. More-

over, his hair was a tousel of crisp golden curls, and his eyes were as blue as the sky above him.

The secret of all this lay in the fact that his mother was of English birth, having been wooed and won by Mr. Sinclair while paying a lengthened visit to the old land. Ernest was his mother's boy in more senses than one, the very fact that he so markedly inherited the characteristics of her own family, and was thus so different from his companions, being to her a source of peculiar pride and pleasure.

The breaking out of the war found the boys well advanced in their teens, and if they had been permitted to have their own way they would both have gone to the front without delay.

But to this neither of their fathers would consent. They were in hearty accord that the army was no place for boys, and were not to be moved from this opinion.

"It's just downright mean—that's what it is," exclaimed Ernest petulantly, after the failure of a final attempt to change his uncle's mind. "I don't see why father objects so strongly to my going to join him. I could be a bugler, or a mounted messenger, or something, I'm sure. Dear knows, I can ride well enough, at all events."

"Don't fret, Ernie," said Victor quietly. "We'll have our chance before long—if not with the army, then in some other way. This is going to be a big fight, I can tell you, and before it's ended the South will need every fellow that's willing to help. We'll have our chance, never you fear."

He spoke with such calm confidence that Ernest was sufficiently convinced to cease his grumbling.

"You're just right there, Victor," he responded. "Our chance is bound to come; but in the meantime, it's mighty poor fun waiting for it. It can't come too soon to please me," and throwing out his arms he fell into the pose of one waiting the approach of an antagonist.

In spite of, or perhaps, it should be said, because of their many dissimilarities, the two boys were bosom friends. Victor being but six months Ernest's senior, they had been playmates from the nursery.

No one, save his own mother, understood Victor so well as Ernest, and with the same exception no one had such a hold upon Victor's heart as Ernest.

Ernest was ever Victor's champion before those who misunderstood and disliked the reserved, taciturn lad; while Victor often stood Ernest in good stead when the latter's impetuosity had got him into some

difficulty out of which he was puzzled to extricate himself.

Not long before the opening of the conflict, they had both taken possession of stools in the counting-room of John Sinclair's Sons, and began to cherish ambitious thoughts concerning the time when "John Sinclair's Grandsons" would be more accurate.

But the blockading of the port not only made their pens rust idly on the desk, it rudely dispelled all these fair dreams of future commercial dignity. Unless some way of marketing their immense accumulations of cotton could be found, the firm of John Sinclair's Sons must become irretrievably insolvent.

Debarred from taking any active part in the struggle, the boys were resolved to witness as much as they could of it at all events. They therefore seized every opportunity of visiting the forts which defended the harbour, because from them could be seen the cruisers of the blockading squadrons lying at their anchors, or moving warily to and fro.

Many a time Ernest shook his fist at this hostile fleet, exclaiming angrily,—

"Confound you! I'd like to blow every one of you out of the water!"

But Victor would content himself with a significant scowl of profound hatred. It was not his way to waste vain words upon anything or anybody. But his thoughts were ceaselessly active despite his silence.

Sometimes as they stood upon the upper walls of Fort Sumter, or were on the ramparts of the batteries on Morris Island, a Federal cruiser would come within range of the heavy guns. For such an opportunity the Southern artillerymen were always on the watch, and without delay iron missiles would be sent hurtling after the impertinent intruder.

Quite often these hard compliments would be returned, and a brisk duel take place, greatly to the boys' delight. But these engagements were usually brief. The cruisers rarely came close enough to do any damage, or to suffer harm, their action being more for the sake of keeping their gunners in practice than with the expectation of silencing a battery.

The most important and exciting engagement that the boys had the good fortune to witness was the gallant attempt made by two ironclad rams to break the blockade.

With infinite pains and ingenuity, for they were woefully short of the proper machinery and material,

the Confederates had contrived to construct two strange-looking vessels somewhat similar to the famous *Merrimac*, but of smaller size.

They were named the *Chicora* and the *Palmetto State*; and great hopes were entertained of their effectiveness against the wooden frigates and gunboats that made up the blockading fleet.

Both Victor and Ernest had striven hard to be allowed to join their crews. They were quite willing to serve as "powder-monkeys," or in any other capacity, however unimportant, so long as they might share in the perils and the glory of the enterprise.

But there were too many stalwart men eager for a place on board to leave any room for boys, and, to their keen disappointment, they had to content themselves with the rôle of spectators.

It was while seeking to console each other over this that a bright idea flashed into Ernest's busy brain, which caused him to jump off his feet with a shout of joy.

"Hullo!" exclaimed Victor, with a little start of surprise, "what's struck you so suddenly?"

Ernest was about to reply, when he paused, and a merry gleam shone in his blue eyes.

"Wouldn't you like to have an A1 view of the fight?" he presently inquired.

"Of course I would," answered Victor, "and I intended going down to Fort Sumter for that very purpose."

"What would you say to having a better chance to see it all than even from the top of Fort Sumter?" queried Ernest, with a significant smile that moved Victor to retort impatiently,—

"What are you driving at, Ernie? Out with it. Don't keep me waiting in this aggravating way."

"Is there anything the matter with our going down in the *Flamingo*, and watching the whole business from a safe distance?" responded Ernest, his merry face growing more serious as the daring and delight of the thing came over him.

For a moment or two Victor regarded his cousin with an expression such as might have been called forth by a statue suddenly breaking into speech. The very brilliance of the suggestion dazzled him into momentary silence.

Then his sallow face flamed and his dark eyes flashed, as he sprang towards Ernest as though thrilled with an electric shock.

"What a glorious notion!" he cried, grasping his

cousin by the arms, and giving him an ecstatic shake. "How did you ever happen to think of it?"

Elated at this enthusiastic reception of his idea, Ernest was for going right off to see about arranging for the *Flamingo*, when the more calculating Victor checked him with the questioning remark,—

"I hope father won't object."

At this a cloud fell upon Ernest's countenance. In the characteristic haste of his thoughts he had not paused to take into account the possibility of his uncle vetoing the scheme.

But that contingency had now to be considered.

"Surely he won't," he returned with more than a suspicion of a pout. "We'll take care not to run any risks of being captured."

"We'll have to get his consent, anyway," said Victor, "and I vote we go and ask him now."

Accordingly they hurried off to the warehouse, where they knew Victor's father would be at that hour.

As it chanced they could not have hit upon a more propitious moment. Mr. Sinclair was just in that bitter, dejected frame of mind when anything that promised diversion was heartily welcome. His forced inaction while others were fighting for the

cause so dear to his heart, and the apparently hopeless ruin of the great commercial establishment in which he had taken such pride, preyed cruelly on his spirit. He sorely needed relief from himself and his own carking cares.

On Ernest presenting his proposition he stared at him for an instant, being hardly less surprised by it than his son had been. Then his face lit up, and bringing his hand down on the desk with a heavy bang, he exclaimed,—

“Ernie, you’re a regular genius! That’s a great scheme! We’ll do it—sure’s you’re born.”

With his mind completely taken off his worries for the time, Mr. Sinclair set about making the necessary arrangements.

The *Flamingo* was a steamer belonging to the firm, and used in making trips to Wilmington, Savannah, and others of the South Atlantic ports, conveying merchandise and carrying cotton.

She was a paddle-wheel craft of about one hundred and fifty tons burden, and capable under pressure of the then notable speed of ten knots an hour.

Although intended more especially for freight purposes, she had a very roomy, comfortable cabin,

and had on many occasions done service as a pleasure yacht, conveying the Sinclairs and their friends down to Florida on hunting expeditions, or across to the West India Islands for a holiday trip.

Since the blockading of Charleston the *Flamingo* had been lying idle at the wharf. She was too lightly constructed to be of any use as a gunboat, and there was no chance of her displaying her admirable qualifications for duty as a dispatch boat.

A few hours sufficed to put her in readiness, and nothing remained but to wait for the starting of the ironclads.

As soon as it became known that the little steamer was going down to witness the fight, Mr. Sinclair was overwhelmed with requests for permission to accompany him, of which he granted as many as the boat could comfortably accommodate.

It was in the early morning of the last day of January when the two rams slipped quietly down the harbour, and passing between Fort Moultrie on the left and Fort Sumter on the right, steered steadily towards the long line of cruisers lying at anchor just out of range of the Confederate batteries.

Close behind them followed the *Flamingo* until the main ship-channel was reached. Here, protected by the rifled guns of Fort Wagner on Morris Island, she was free to move to and fro and miss nothing of the coming conflict. Trembling with excitement, the two boys, who had taken up their positions on the main-truck, awaited the opening of the engagement.

## CHAPTER II.

### FITTING UP THE "FLAMINGO."

CONCEALED by the morning haze which hung heavily over the water, the *Chicora* and the *Palmetto State* bore down upon their foes.

They were very curious-looking affairs, and utterly unlike the ordinary war-vessel. One hundred and fifty feet in length and nearly forty in breadth, they lay very low in the water, and were entirely without masts or top-hamper of any kind save a slight flag-staff at bow and stern.

Their sharply-sloping sides which rose from a flat deck were protected by a double layer of two-inch iron bolted to a solid backing of oak nearly two feet thick. Their bows were elongated so as to constitute a formidable ram, which was also heavily armoured.

Both carried an armament of what were then regarded as heavy guns, and their speed was about seven knots an hour.

Passing through the North Channel, the *Palmetto State* steered straight for the *Mercedita*, a wooden gunboat then lying at her moorings; and her approach being well masked by the mist, she was almost alongside before a sudden clearing of the atmosphere revealed her presence.

"What steamer is that? Drop your anchor, or you will be into us!" shouted the *Mercedita's* captain, not a little startled by this strange apparition.

"The Confederate States' steamer *Palmetto State*," was her commander's response, and, as he spoke, he fired an eight-inch shell into his opponent, which, after piercing the boiler, exploded so as to blow a huge hole in the opposite side of the vessel close to the water-line.

The escaping steam wrought more havoc than the shell, and the captain of the *Mercedita*, being called upon to surrender, thought it best to haul down his flag and give parole for his officers and men.

When Ernest saw the Union colours lowered, he waxed so jubilant that he would assuredly have tumbled off the truck but for Victor's restraining hand.

"Mind yourself, Ernie!" he cried in some alarm. "You'll break your neck if you fall off here."

"But just look," exclaimed Ernest. "One of the

cruisers taken already, and the rams are going after another."

Sure enough, without waiting to secure her prize, the *Palmetto State* had joined the *Chicora* in an attack upon the *Keystone State*.

The commander of this vessel, taking warning from the firing, had slipped his cables, got steam up, and ordered the forward rifled gun to be trained on the advancing assailants.

Hailing the foremost stranger, and getting an unsatisfactory reply, the *Keystone State* began firing; but her shot made little or no impression upon the armour of the ironclad, while a shell from the *Chicora* entered her forward hold and set her on fire.

Directing his men to continue firing as their guns bore, the commander of the *Keystone State* put his helm apart and steamed away north-east until the fire in the hold was extinguished.

Then, like a doughty warrior, he returned to the fight, and made a gallant attempt to charge one of the rams.

But a well-aimed shell entering the port-side smashed the steam-pipes, emptied the boiler, and filled the vessel with scalding steam, while two solid shot pierced the hull under the water-line.

Realizing that to prolong the conflict could mean only the destruction of his vessel and the death of his crew, the commander of the *Keystone State* regretfully hauled down his colours, on seeing which Ernest again risked his neck in the exuberance of his joy.

"Pretty work ! keep it up !" he shouted, just as if his voice could have been heard across the water and through the roar of battle.

Again making no attempt to take possession of their prize, the rams kept on after the other vessels of the squadron. But, although the conflict was maintained in a desultory fashion for another hour, no further results of consequence were achieved ; and the Northern cruisers concentrating their fire upon the rams, the latter deemed it prudent to retire before they suffered material damage.

Carried away by enthusiasm for the success of this dashing attempt, Mr. Sinclair threw prudence to the winds, and steamed out to meet the returning rams.

This proceeding did not go unnoticed by the blockading fleet, for presently the loud roar of a big Parrot gun was heard, and a splash like a small waterspout on the starboard side of the *Flamingo* showed that the Union gunners were marksmen by no means to be trifled with.

"Dash these rascally Yankees," growled Mr. Sinclair. "They're too mighty smart, they are. Put her about, captain. We're not going to play target for them. We'll wait for the ironclads by Fort Sumter."

The *Flamingo* accordingly came about and sped away out of range, the Federal cruisers wasting a few more shots on her before they despaired of doing her some damage.

As the two ironclads steamed up the harbour they were received with the utmost demonstrations of joy. The Confederate colours floated joyously from Fort Beauregard, and Cummings Point Battery, and the other defences of the city; while as the vessels glided between Forts Sumter and Moultrie, and thence onward past Fort Ripley, their garrisons fired *feus de joie*, little as they could afford to squander powder.

In Charleston the people for a time forgot all their troubles in a burst of wild rejoicing over the triumph of the ironclads. General Beauregard and Commander Ingraham issued a proclamation declaring that the blockade had been raised, and the port once more open to the world.

But in this they were altogether premature.

Although rather badly scared, the Federal fleet

was far from being scattered. On the contrary, reinforcements were at once sent for, and ere any advantage could be taken of their temporary defeat they had closed in upon the approaches to Charleston more resolutely than before.

Having been in so favourable a position to witness the whole of the engagement, Victor and Ernest were naturally in great demand to give an account of what they had seen.

This the latter thoroughly enjoyed doing; but Victor, having told the story once, thought it too much trouble to repeat it, and considerably increased his unpopularity by closing his lips upon the subject.

Moreover, there was fermenting in his mind a scheme which he wanted to think out thoroughly before broaching it even to Ernest.

Now a very noticeable change took place in Mr. Robert Sinclair after the naval conflict of which he had been a spectator.

His moodiness gave way to a feverish restlessness. Having been awakened out of his dejection, he seemed to thirst for vigorous action. He applied to be put in command of one of the ironclads, that another attack upon the blockading fleet might be made; and, when this could not be arranged, asked to have the

*Flamingo* fitted out as a gunboat, his idea being to make sudden dashes out from the harbour under cover of dusk, and having fired a couple of shots at the nearest cruiser, to retreat again before the Federal gunners could get his range.

But the naval authorities could not spare him such guns as he required for this purpose, and nothing came of his application.

It was when irritated by this disappointment that Victor came to him with the scheme that he had been hatching.

His father listened attentively while the boy outlined his plan. Evidently he saw a great deal in it, and was inclined to regard it favourably. But he was not a man to act hastily.

"That's a brilliant idea of yours, Victor," he said, laying his hand tenderly on his son's shoulder. "But it involves a tremendous risk. Yet, after all, what's the use of being stewed up here like rats in a trap?" he added bitterly. "I'll think it over to-night, Victor, and we'll have another talk about it in the morning."

Victor's face wore an exultant expression as he went out of his father's office.

"He'll go in for it, right enough," he said to him-

self. "It's not the money I care for; it's the fun of the thing."

During the following fortnight Mr. Sinclair was one of the busiest men in Charleston, and as a natural consequence one of the cheeriest.

At first Victor and Ernest were the only persons who fully shared his confidence. He wanted his plans as nearly perfected as possible before allowing them to become public.

There was more cause for this than simply a proper desire to keep his own counsel until he saw his way clear to carrying out his design.

The existence of Northern spies was more than suspected in the city. From time to time information had reached the enemy which could have come only from some one inside the Southern lines.

A more perilous occupation a man could hardly engage in, yet throughout the war there were many found on both sides who, inspired by love of country or greed of gold, were willing to run the fearful risks involved.

While Victor's circle of friends was a very limited one, Ernest, to use a common expression, knew everybody. In fact he rather prided himself upon the extent and variety of his acquaintance.

Among those who seemed specially anxious for intimacy with him was one Silas Fitch, of whose antecedents little was known, save that he had come to Charleston shortly after the opening of the war, claiming to have found the North too hot for him because of his Southern sympathies.

Fitch was a good many years Ernest's senior, yet soon after his arrival he sought his companionship in a way that could not fail of being flattering to the boy.

He was rather a brilliant fellow, had evidently seen a good deal of the world, possessed no small skill at various games, always dressed in a stylish fashion, and cultivated a *blasé* man-of-the-world manner which ingenuous Ernest thought very much to be admired.

Victor instinctively disliked Fitch without being able to account clearly for the antipathy.

"I can't for the life of me see what you like in that fellow Fitch," he would say impatiently to Ernest.

"And I can't see what you dislike in him," Ernest would retort. "He's a first-class chap, I think, and I wish you'd take to him too."

But Victor either couldn't or wouldn't take to him, although his father was favourably impressed by him, and made him welcome as a visitor at his house.

Fitch evidently perceived Victor's dislike, and laid himself out to dispel it by every means in his power. But with only partial success. The utmost he could win from him was a well-bred toleration that kept him constantly at arm's length.

As the days slipped by, and the preparation for Mr. Sinclair's enterprise approached completion, Fitch was continually on hand, until, more for that reason than for any other, Mr. Sinclair took him into his confidence.

He at once manifested a burning desire to be permitted to share in the venture.

"It's everlastingly dull doing nothing here," he urged; "and I'll turn my hand to anything you say so long as you let me join you."

Not only did he speak for himself, but he got Ernest to plead on his behalf, and, although Victor was strongly opposed to his request being granted, Mr. Sinclair in the end gave his consent.

Perhaps if he had been permitted to see the smile of sardonic exultation that Fitch's face wore when he left him, he might have reconsidered his decision.

Of course Mr. Sinclair's proceedings could not go unobserved, and innumerable were the questions showered upon him and the two boys associated with him.

These inquiries neither he nor Victor found any difficulty in evading, nor were they in the least disturbed by the wild and surprising rumours that got into circulation.

Some would have it that they were turning the *Flamingo* into an ironclad of a very novel feature, wherewith to make another attempt upon the blockaders.

Others asserted that the steamer was to become a fire-ship of a peculiarly destructive kind, which, being sent into the midst of the cruisers, was to blow up at the right moment and scatter destruction all about her.

Still others, taking a less generous and patriotic view of the matter, darkly hinted that what Mr. Sinclair had in mind was to load the *Flamingo* with cotton, and then putting on board his own family and his brother's, clear out some dark night, trusting to evade the cruisers, and find a refuge in the West India Islands, there to wait comfortably until the war was over.

Poor Ernest was greatly bothered by the questions, and incensed by the rumours that came to his ears. Many a time he exclaimed in petulance,—

"Hang all this secrecy! What's the use of it any-

way? Everybody's talking about us, and saying all sorts of things. Perhaps if they knew just what we were up to they'd let us alone."

But it was precisely because Mr. Sinclair felt sure that if the public did know what he was about they would not let him alone that he so strictly enjoined secrecy; and Ernest obeyed him faithfully, difficult as he found the task to be.

By the end of ten days great changes had been made in the *Flamingo*. Originally built so as to have accommodation for both passengers and freight, all her arrangements for the former were ruthlessly removed.

The rear cabin, with its comfortable state-rooms, was stripped of all fittings and finishings, and converted into a receptacle for cargo. The hold itself was altered so as to considerably enlarge its capacity, and only the small fore-cabin was left for the use of those who should be on board.

Her engines were thoroughly overhauled and put in first-class order, and the rear sheathing of the paddle-boxes taken off, so that when she was being driven at her utmost speed the water might get away freely from the floats of the big wheels.

These floats, moreover, were changed to the feather-

ing kind ; and in fact nothing that would help to improve the steamer's speed was left undone.

Finally, her funnel was made telescopic, so that its height could, if necessary, be reduced one-half ; and the whole vessel was painted a dull leaden colour that would render her entirely invisible at sea when only a short distance off.

By the time his preparations had reached this stage, Mr. Sinclair thought it expedient to declare his purposes. No sooner had he done so than the accuracy of his foresight was proved, for he was simply overwhelmed with requests, petitions, and prayers from every quarter.

People who had neither the courage nor the ability to undertake such an enterprise as his, were none the less eager to profit by his venture ; and had he accepted one-half the suggestions offered, or assumed one-quarter of the commissions urged upon him, he would have been as heavily burdened as Atlas.

But he had no thought of doing either. He would just go his own way and no other, unheeding of the advice, and indifferent to the temptations spread before him.

It was a vast relief to Ernest to speak freely of their plans. Once his lips were unsealed his tongue

wagged merrily, and his friends certainly had no reason to complain of any lack of information.

Curiously enough Silas Fitch, having once succeeded in becoming thoroughly informed himself, seemed anxious to prevent the general public knowing everything.

"I wouldn't give it all away, if I were you, Ernest," he said once in a significant tone to his companion. "There's no knowing how many folks are about who'd be glad of a chance to post the Yankees as to what you're up to."

"Let them tell," responded Ernest, with reckless indignation in his tone. "Anybody that's mean enough to do a thing like that is only fit to be hung, and they're not going to stop us anyway."

Had Ernest been a keen observer he could hardly have failed to notice that Fitch visibly quailed before his fiery words, and for a moment a sickly pallor showed on his cheek. But he was blind to what would not have escaped Victor's sharp eyes; and recovering himself in a moment, Fitch with a forced laugh of indifference said,—

"I guess you're right. You've got nothing to be afraid of."

It was not without some difficulty that the Sinclair

families were reconciled to the perilous enterprise in which Mr. Robert Sinclair and the two boys were about to engage.

The women were full of affectionate apprehension, and the other boys all wanted to be allowed to go also. But eventually these matters were adjusted so far as they could be, and the way was clear for making a start.

The *Flamingo* was to run the blockade.

An easy enough sentence to write, but it would be no easy task to make clear to readers of to-day just how much the success of her venture meant to the city of Charleston.

To open a way of disposing of the cotton now heaped up in vast quantities in the warehouses, and at the same time to obtain the munitions of war and manufactured articles that were so sorely needed in the South, was to accomplish something of even more importance than to win a brilliant battle on the field, or to put to flight a fleet of cruisers.

Intense then was the interest taken in Mr. Sinclair's daring scheme, and the final preparations were watched by crowds of spectators, who were in danger of showing some of their numbers overboard in their eagerness to see everything that was done.

At length all was in readiness. The *Flamingo* had been stuffed and loaded with cotton until absolutely not another bale could be stowed. The bunkers fairly overflowed with coal. The fore-cabin had been fitted up as well as its limited space permitted; and Mr. Sinclair and the boys, having taken a fond farewell of their families, went aboard.

Besides these three, and Silas Fitch, who in spite of Victor's opposition had succeeded in carrying his point, those on board the steamer comprised the pilot, two engineers, six black stokers, and as many seamen.

One other member of the crew must not be forgotten. This was Erebus—a gigantic negro, born on Mr. Sinclair's plantation thirty years before, who, because of his magnificent proportions and unusual intelligence, had always enjoyed especial privileges.

In return for these favours he manifested toward Mr. Sinclair a zealous fidelity that was surprising in a slave, and he was often taken as a body-servant by him when he went travelling.

Erebus entertained a great respect for Victor, but a genuine love for Ernest, who was always very kind to him, and both boys were glad to have him on board.

Choosing a moonless night, Mr. Sinclair, with dif-

faculty controlling the excitement that thrilled him, ordered the *Flamingo* to be cast loose, and the little steamer, upon whose achievement so much depended, glided down the harbour.

Passing close by Fort Ripley, whose garrison gave her a fervent cheer, and touching the dark shadow of Fort Sumter, the *Flamingo* kept on until she had turned Cummings Point.

Here she paused for a few minutes in order to get her right bearings by means of range lights on the shore, and then, putting on all steam, dashed straight out to sea.

## CHAPTER III.

### RUNNING THE BLOCKADE.

UNQUESTIONABLY the three most excited persons on board the *Flamingo* as she sped out through the North Channel were Victor, Ernest, and Fitch.

The first, however, managed to keep himself pretty well in hand. But Ernest was as restless as a squirrel in a cage; while Fitch seemed strangely nervous, seeing how eager he had been to come. He could not stay any time in one place, moving about as much as the cumbered condition of the steamer's decks permitted; and it might have been noticed that Victor somehow contrived to keep him always under his eye.

Drawing but little water for a vessel of her size, and the tide being high, the *Flamingo* did not need to keep carefully to the channel in crossing the bar. She was free to choose almost any course.

Because of the extent of this bar, and of the long range of some of the guns on the Confederate batteries, the cruisers had to preserve quite a respectful distance from the shore.

This was altogether in the *Flamingo's* favour, as it enabled her to get her speed up to the highest pitch before she had to begin the running of the gauntlet.

Greatly to Mr. Sinclair's gratification, the many hundreds of bales of cotton carried seemed to have no effect upon the vessel's speed. So far as he could tell, she cut through the water with undiminished celerity.

Victor and Ernest were standing together on the bridge beside Mr. Sinclair and the pilot, when the latter, pointing to some specks of light that seemed like stars low down on the eastern horizon, said significantly,—

“That's them; they always carry mast-head lights to let one another know where they are.”

The pilot's hearers would have been more than mortal if queer qualms of apprehension had not shot through them at this announcement.

Beneath those faint lights, some of which were evidently moving slowly, while others kept still, lay

the powerful war-vessels of their enemies, ready to blow them out of the water if they could not capture them.

As far north and south as the eye could reach these lights showed themselves. Not less than a round dozen of cruisers were doing patrol duty, and through this cordon the little *Flamingo* had to effect a safe passage.

"It makes me creep to see those lights; doesn't it you?" said Ernest, pressing close to Victor. "We'll soon be right amongst them, won't we?"

"I'd just as soon there weren't quite so many of them," answered Victor, doing his best to seem at his ease. "It doesn't look as if there was very much room to get between them, does it?"

"No, indeed," responded Ernest, somewhat dolefully. "And I suppose if they do catch sight of us, they'll just fire away regardless of expense," he added, with a lugubrious smile.

"They might fire a good many shots without hitting us, Ernie," Mr. Sinclair broke in. "We're almost invisible a hundred yards off, and I'm not going to let any of them come within a quarter of a mile of me if I can help it."

Having been accustomed to command the *Flamingo*,

Mr. Sinclair had taken no captain with him. With the assistance of a good pilot, he felt quite competent to look after his vessel as well as it could be done.

Bearing away to the south after the bar had been left behind, the doughty blockade-runner was pointed for what seemed the widest gap in the line of cruisers.

The night was clear, and the stars shone brightly. A brisk breeze blowing inshore made glad Mr. Sinclair's heart, as it prevented the sound of the steamer's paddle-wheels being borne to the enemy.

The strictest orders had been given that absolutely no lights should be shown by the *Flamingo*. Even the binnacle was so shrouded that not a ray escaped from its lamp, although the pilot was still able to see the compass.

Every one on board was at the highest tension, and all except the engineers and stokers were peering anxiously ahead, striving to pierce the gloom.

On sped the steamer, the rhythmic beat of her paddle-wheels making sweet music in Mr. Sinclair's ears.

"You're doing grandly, little woman," said he, in as tender a tone as though he were cheering on a human being. "Another mile, and we'll be out of sight of them all."

Just at that moment Victor, who had gone to the

bow, and whose vision was of extraordinary keenness, came tumbling back over the cotton to exclaim breathlessly,—

“Father, there’s a big ship just ahead! We’re running right into her.”

He had hardly spoken before his warning was verified by the sudden looming up of a black hull on the starboard bow not more than two hundred yards away. For some reason this cruiser was carrying no lights, and hence her presence had not been detected until the *Flamingo* was almost upon her.

Excitable Ernest nearly shouted out—not in fear, but in frantic haste for the course of the steamer to be changed.

In an instant the order went from the pilot to the engine-room to reverse the port wheel and keep on with the other, while the rudder was set hard a-port until the chains were like bars of iron.

The pilot swore vigorously under his breath, and Mr. Sinclair’s face grew white and stern, but neither showed a trace of nervousness.

With a quickness possible only in a paddle-wheel steamer the *Flamingo* swung around, and dashed off on a course at right angles to her former one.

Silas Fitch, perched on a bale of cotton amidships,

watched all this with intense interest. Had it been daylight, a decided shadow of disappointment might have been seen to darken his countenance as the presence of the blockade-runner continued unperceived on board the cruiser.

Suddenly he drew a cigar from his pocket, and setting it between his teeth, struck a match to light it. His position was such that the blaze of the match could not fail to be visible to any alert watcher on the Federal ship.

As the match flared up the pilot gave a howl of rage, and with a fierce oath demanded who it was that had lit the match.

Fitch at once hastened to the bridge, profuse in apology and penitence for his thoughtlessness.

"I am so worked up," he explained, "that I hardly know what I'm doing."

"Then you'd better go below till we're out of this scrape, you blamed idiot!" growled the pilot, who was in too high a temper to have any respect for the offender's feelings.

Giving the pilot a look that boded him no good if he ever got the chance of doing him harm, Fitch went down into the cabin, muttering something that was not audible.

But the mischief had been already done. Up from the cruiser's bow a rocket soared hissing into mid-air, and broke in a brilliant shower of coloured spray. Lights flashed on her deck, and from her stern came the startling hail,—

“Heave-to instantly, or I'll fire!”

“Fire away then!” responded Mr. Sinclair, straightening himself up, and then bowing towards the cruiser as though accepting a challenge.

“Can you give her any more steam?” he asked of the engine-room.

“Not another pound,” the chief engineer answered. “She's up to her top notch now.”

“All right then; keep her there,” was the response.

The next moment a blinding flash, followed by a tremendous report, came from the cruiser. Not being able to make out the *Flamingo* clearly, but guessing her position from the momentary flare of the match, the commander of the cruiser let fly his whole broadside.

By common consent all on the blockade-runner's deck threw themselves down flat, or dodged behind the cotton bales, while the volley of shot and shell whistled by.

Happily the little steamer sat so low in the water that the iron hail went harmlessly over her, one shot

alone taking effect, and it doing no more damage than the carrying away of the foremast above the truck.

“They’ve clean missed us!” cried Ernest exultantly; “though they did try so hard.”

“That fellow’s too extravagant with his ammunition,” said Victor contemptuously. “He’s more likely to hit one of his own crowd than us if he doesn’t take care.”

It was evident that the whole fleet was now aroused. Rockets went up from ship after ship, and lights gleamed upon their decks.

No further shots were fired, however, probably through fear of their hitting one another, but they were plainly endeavouring to close in upon the vessel which was seeking to evade their vigilance.

“They’re not going to let us off easy,” said the pilot to Mr. Sinclair. “If they can only make us out, they’ll follow us right out to sea. But I reckon we can show them a pretty good pair of heels.”

Such good speed was the *Flamingo* making that already the hulls of the cruisers were no longer to be distinguished, and there was a ring of triumph in Mr. Sinclair’s voice as he responded,—

“Let them follow; a stern-chase is a long chase,

and we'll soon put them all astern at the rate we're going."

Once more steering straight for her destination, the *Flamingo* tore through the water, leaving the pursuing cruisers further behind every minute.

They had been under only half steam when she broke through their line, and of course it took some time for them to get up to their full speed.

These precious minutes the *Flamingo* put to such good advantage that, favoured by the obscurity of the night, she gave them all the slip, and when daylight dawned not a single cruiser was visible.

Nobody on board had thought of closing his eyes during the excitement, and the two boys particularly felt thoroughly tired out, so that after breakfast they were glad to turn into their bunks for a good snooze.

But although the blockade had been so successfully passed, there could be no relaxation of vigilance on board the steamer.

The Northerners were not content with striving to close the Southern ports. Their cruisers sentinelled the seas between the Atlantic coast and the West India Islands, and at any moment one of these hostile vessels might be encountered, ready to make a prize of the *Flamingo*.

The day proved as fine as could be wished, and with everybody but one in high spirits the little steamer kept steadily on her course, running at three-quarter speed.

The one exception was Silas Fitch. Although Mr. Sinclair, his good-humour restored by the fact that no serious consequences had ensued, seemed quite satisfied with the profuse apologies he made for his stupidity, there had been a questioning look in Victor's eye that was not reassuring.

"He's too mighty cute," muttered Fitch to himself, "and if I don't keep a sharp eye on him he'll spoil my programme yet."

Just what his programme was no one on board the *Flamingo* knew, or even surmised. Victor himself had not the slightest suspicion of the real truth. He simply felt an aversion toward the fellow, which made him quick to catch at any cause of offence, and he was determined to have as little of his company as possible. In fact, his mind would not be at rest concerning him until he was off the *Flamingo* for good.

No one on board the blockade-runner had more keenly enjoyed the excitement of the chase than the negro Erebus. So complete was his devotion to his

master that the fact of the main cause of the war being the abolition of slavery had had no effect in his mind. While other slaves were escaping to the North, or plotting against their owners at home, his fidelity had remained unshaken.

It therefore meant nothing to him that, if the *Flamingo* were captured, he would at once obtain his freedom. On the contrary, there was nobody more concerned for the success of her venture than he.

"By golly, Massa Ernest!" he cried, coming up to Ernest after the latter had awakened from his nap, "wasn't dat jest de best kind ob a lark, eh?" and he broke into a hearty laugh that revealed a mouth capable of admitting a whole orange without overdue straining. "De way dose big fool Yankees kep' banging away when we wasn't where dey was aiming at all, ho! ho! ho!" and teeth and eyes flashed white as he roared out his merriment.

"But you mustn't laugh till you're out of the wood, Rebus," responded Ernest with an indulgent smile, for he thoroughly liked the big fellow, and was always ready to chat with him. "We're not done with the Yankee cruisers yet."

"What's dat you say, Massa Ernest?" asked the negro, his sable countenance suddenly changing from

gay to grave. "Surely goodness dese not a-going to come after us again."

"Not those that we've got away from," answered Ernest, smiling at the quick collapse of Erebus' rejoicings. "But don't flatter yourself that they're all we have to look out for. We might come across a cruiser any minute. There are lots of them hunting around—bad luck to them."

"Whoopee!" exclaimed Erebus, shoving out his thick lips, and wrinkling his wool-crowned brows. "Der ain't much fun about dat. But," and his face brightened again, "dey can't catch us anyway. De little *Flamingo* she run away from de best ob dem."

The morning was not far advanced before his confidence in the steamer was put to the test, for about nine o'clock the look-out on the mast called out to Mr. Sinclair, who was on the bridge,—

"Steamer ahoy, sir!"

"Where away?" asked Mr. Sinclair, the anxious look that had left his face for a time quickly coming back to it.

"Right astern, sir, and coming straight on."

Sure enough in a few minutes more a large paddle-wheel cruiser hove into view about six miles astern,

and, catching sight of the *Flamingo's* smoke, at once made chase.

Not only was all steam put on, but sails were hoisted on both masts, the foremast having been sufficiently repaired to still do duty.

Yet, although the engines worked admirably, and the sails drew well, by the end of the first half-hour it was evident that the heavy cargo the *Flamingo* carried had its effect upon her speed.

"I'm afeard the cruiser has the legs of us, sir," said the pilot glumly to Mr. Sinclair, "and with the whole day afore us it's rather a bad look-out."

"She does seem to be gaining on us, pilot," replied Mr. Sinclair; "but she'll have a long hard job of it getting near enough to board us, I can tell you."

"If we strike the Gulf Stream right, and she doesn't, we'll make up all we've lost," said the pilot, brightening up a little at this idea, which had just occurred to him; "and we must be pretty near the edge of it now."

Keeping one eye on the cruiser, and with the other watching for the curious ripple which marked the Gulf Stream, the pilot was silent, until suddenly he exclaimed,—

"There it is! We'll head for it."

The ripple was plainly discernible, and steering straight for it the *Flamingo*, on crossing the edge of the stream, got the benefit of the current, there running at the rate of three miles an hour.

Seeing the blockade-runner alter her course, the cruiser did the same; but as she did not cross the ripple on the edge of the stream, and the course she was then steering tended to keep her for some time from doing so, the *Flamingo* dropped her rapidly astern, until she had a clear lead of at least seven miles.

"Bah! bah!" shouted Ernest derisively at the big cruiser. "You're not so smart as you thought yourself after all. You'd better just give up the job as a bad one, and go back to your station."

"She's not going to give us up for a while yet," said Fitch, with a smile that was not altogether one of sympathy with the boy's premature jubilation. "She seems to be gaining a little on us too."

He was right. Being now in the current of the Gulf Stream herself, and enjoying its advantage to the same degree as her quarry, the cruiser once more began to close in, until by five o'clock in the afternoon not more than three miles separated pursuer and pursued.

"Unless we can keep out of her reach until dark, we're in a fair way to see New York, boys," said Mr. Sinclair, in a tone full of dejection. "It's confounded hard lines making a miss of it at the very start, but it's the fortune of war. I hope they'll not be too hard upon you, anyway."

At six o'clock the cruiser began firing from the Parrot gun in her bow, but at first the shot fell far short.

"They're not the best marksmen in the world, are they?" said Victor contemptuously.

"All the better for us," replied Ernest. "I don't care how badly they miss us. It's being hit I mind, and we'll stand a good chance of that happening before long."

The sun set a little before seven o'clock, and by that time the Federal vessel had got so near that her shots went right over the *Flamingo*, and she was steadily coming up.

Already the pilot's courage was beginning to falter, and he gave questioning glances at Mr. Sinclair, who stood beside him on the bridge.

But the latter showed no sign of weakening. His features set in a look of almost savage sternness, he kept his eyes fixed upon the advancing cruiser as though measuring each yard of her progress.

Close together on the port side of the bridge the two boys watched for the firing of the guns, wondering as each flash flew out from the pursuer's bow whether this time the iron missive would come crashing into their midst.

Fitch had gone to the stern, presumably to note how the cruiser was gaining, but really because he wanted to be out of range of Victor's searching eyes.

The *Flamingo's* chances of escape seemed rapidly dwindling. Within another half-hour the cruiser would be in position to let fly her whole broadside at her, and to resist further under these circumstances would be nothing short of suicide.

"Shall we keep on, sir?" inquired the pilot, in a tone that plainly betrayed accents of fear. He knew well enough that capture meant a Northern prison, but even that was better than immediate death.

"Until I give the word to stop," growled Mr. Sinclair; "we're not done for yet. Look there!"

As night came on the weather had grown cloudy, and happily the *Flamingo* was on the dark side of the moon, then setting in the west, which, occasionally breaking through the clouds astern of the cruiser, showed her up plainly, while the blockade-runner was every minute becoming less distinct. This was

evident from the erratic character of the former's firing, none of her shots having just the right range.

When the cruiser was not more than a mile off, Mr. Sinclair suddenly altered his course two points to the eastward, and then, to the surprise of all on board, ordered the engineer to stop, and steam to be blown off under the water.

In utter silence and darkness, the gallant little steamer apparently awaited capture.

On came the cruiser, firing away with her bow guns. No doubt her commander was already beginning to estimate the rich gains that would accrue to him from the prize now within reach.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A SUCCESSFUL STRATEGY.

“**P**ASS the word for dead silence now,” ordered Mr. Sinclair, whose countenance bore a look of lofty resolution. “The first one that makes a noise goes overboard.”

All hands were on deck, the engineers and stokers having left their posts as they had nothing to do there, and did not want to be caught like rats in a trap.

Fitch, who had been at the stern, came forward and joined the group on the bridge. It was so dark that he had not to take any pains to conceal the exultant flash of his eye, nor the curl of satisfaction on his lips.

The steady splashing of the cruiser’s paddle-wheels now seemed to fill the air, save when drowned for a moment by the roar of the Parrot guns.

“She’ll soon be abreast us, sir,” whispered the pilot, upon whom a glimmering of Mr. Sinclair’s daring strategy was beginning to dawn, “and she hasn’t sighted us yet.”

The suspense on board the *Flamingo* cannot be described. In the breathless silence the beating of their hearts seemed to the men like the throbbing of the engines.

"Perhaps they'll go right past us," whispered Ernest to Victor. "Oh wouldn't that be splendid!"

"Hush!" returned Victor warningly, putting his hand over his cousin's mouth.

The cruiser kept right on, and soon was broadside to the *Flamingo*. Were a glimmer of light or the sound of a voice to go to her across the water, the fate of the latter would inevitably be sealed.

At the very moment when the least distance separated the two vessels, Fitch in some inexplicable way lost his footing and fell over against Erebus, who was intently peering through the darkness at the lights of the cruiser, by which alone her presence could be made out.

When every one's nerves were strained to the very utmost, poor Erebus could hardly be blamed for giving way to a shout on being thus collided against.

For an instant all hearts stood still. If that sound reached the cruiser, a broadside would be the immediate response.

But luckily before it could do so the loud report of

a gun swallowed up all other noise, and the cruiser kept on her way, passing the *Flamingo* by without any suspicion of her proximity.

"Who made that noise?" demanded Mr. Sinclair furiously, after the Federal vessel was well out of hearing.

"It was just me, massa," confessed Erebus. "Massa Fitch he done trod on my toe, and it 'most scared de life out of me."

"Confound your clumsiness, Fitch," exclaimed Mr. Sinclair, turning on him the vials of his wrath. "That's the second time you came near dishing us."

Again Fitch was most penitent. His awkwardness had certainly been inexcusable, but he would take good care not to be so stupid again.

The spectacle of the cruiser continuing straight on her course, and firing away at the vessel she imagined to be ahead of her, but which she was in reality rapidly leaving behind, so tickled Mr. Sinclair that he forgot his ill-humour, and clapping Fitch on the shoulder, he said pleasantly,—

"You're forgiven this time, but don't do it again. I wonder how much powder that fellow's wasted upon us, and when he'll wake up to the fact that he's barking up the wrong tree."

The pilot, anxious to atone for his temporary weakening, was profuse in his praises of Mr. Sinclair's clever ruse.

"It was an all-fired cute dodge," he asserted. "I didn't get on to it at all at first. The Yanks 'll find it a tough job to get you into their clutches, I reckon."

So soon as the lights of the cruiser had vanished, the *Flamingo's* engines were started up, and she resumed her course, while Ernest and Victor amused themselves with jeering taunts at their baffled pursuers.

Nothing more was seen of other vessels that night, but the following day they were being frequently sighted by the look-out. Acting on the theory that in such perilous times all new acquaintances were to be avoided, Mr. Sinclair gave them a wide berth, dodging this way and that, or stopping altogether to allow them to pass out of sight.

In order to reduce the chance of being sighted, he had the steamer's topmasts sent down, or rather the main-topmast, one of the Federal cruisers having already shortened his foremast; and as he was burning anthracite coal, which gave little or no smoke, the *Flamingo* succeeded in passing unnoticed.

But of course it was none the less exciting for those on board her. Neither Mr. Sinclair nor the

pilot ever left the bridge for more than a few minutes at a time, and all the others, save those whose duty was in the engine-room, kept scanning the horizon on their own account.

Victor and Ernest spent most of their time at the bow, where, perched on cotton bales, they could be very comfortable, and yet miss nothing.

It would not be long after the look-out had reported a sail before their sharp eyes got hold of it too, and then they would fall to speculating as to whether it was a cruiser or perhaps another blockade-runner.

"If we could only find out, without going too near, just what they are. I wish we could have a talk with one of those vessels," said Victor. "It would be interesting to know what sort of a time they've had, for some of them may have been chased just as hard as we've been."

"Are there many steamers running the blockade now, Vic?" asked Ernest eagerly.

"Quite a few running out of Wilmington," answered Fitch, who had just come up in his quiet way, and overheard the question.

"How do you know?" inquired Victor rather sharply, for he resented Fitch's intrusion. "You haven't been there, have you?"

"Oh, no," Fitch hastened to protest, manifestly confused for the moment by the sudden question. "I haven't been over there, but a man who came from there told me before we left Charleston. See!" he exclaimed, glad of a chance to change the subject, "what do you make out of that? Looks something like a cruiser, doesn't it?"

Off to the south-east the heavy spars of a large vessel were just showing above the horizon. Were the *Flamingo* to continue on her course, she would run right into the arms of the stranger, which might indeed be a British war-vessel, but was just as likely to prove a Federal cruiser, ready to snap her up.

"What a lot of those confounded cruisers there are!" continued Fitch, in a tone of almost exaggerated vexation. "It must cost the Yankees a mighty sight more than it comes to keeping so many of them going."

"Much they care what it costs so long as they starve us out," said Victor in a bitter tone. "They'll make us pay for it all one way or another if we don't lick them."

"But we are going to lick them, Vic, aren't we?" cried Ernest, with whom the ultimate success of the South was an article of faith.

Fitch found it convenient to look very hard in another direction, as he did not wish the expression which Ernest's artless question had called forth to be noticed by the boys.

"What do you think about it, Mr. Fitch?" asked Victor, bending his black eyes searchingly upon the other, for already he was beginning to feel a strong suspicion that he would well bear watching.

Fitch coloured and hesitated before replying.

"Oh, the South is bound to win," he said; but there was a conspicuous lack of sincerity in his tone, and again as a diversion he drew attention to the other vessel, which was now going out of sight, the *Flamingo* having changed her course so as to leave her at right angles.

Such frequent shifting of direction naturally prevented as rapid progress being made as Mr. Sinclair would have liked, and rendered it necessary to spend another night at sea.

It was a night of great anxiety, for several fast Federal vessels were known to be cruising about in those waters, although their right to do so was at least open to question.

Not being quite sure of their exact position, the pilot had only half-steam kept up, and every little

while would stop altogether in order to make sure there was no other vessel near.

In this way the hours of darkness passed, and when morning dawned the pilot announced with great satisfaction that they were practically out of danger.

"See that little island there over the starboard bow," he said, pointing to a patch of green rising out of the deep blue sea. "That's one of the Bahamas; it's called Green Turtle Quay, I believe; and there's a little settlement of Britishers there that it would pay us to lay up at until we know the coast's clear."

The *Flamingo* accordingly felt her way carefully inshore, and came to anchor alongside the islet, upon which a large white English ensign was forthwith hoisted so that there might be no mistake as to its being British territory.

The feeling of security that now came over those on board the blockade-runner was delightful beyond description. For the first time since leaving Charleston their minds were at ease, and Mr. Sinclair having intimated that he would not proceed any further until after mid-day, nearly everybody was free to indulge in any relaxation they liked.

The two boys, accompanied by Erebus, went ashore. They were quite glad to set foot on solid ground

again after the exciting time through which they had passed.

After some conversation with the residents, who seemed very sociably disposed, as indeed they might be, for the blockade-runners were becoming quite a source of profit to them, they went over to the other side of the island.

Here there was a ledge of smooth rock just awash with the waves, the sound of whose soft splashing appealed too strongly to Ernest to be resisted.

"Let's have a swim," he cried, pulling off his jacket. "I'm fairly roasting, and I must cool off."

Victor, being of the same mind, began to undress also, saying to Erebus, who was looking with longing eyes at the clear cool water,—

"You come in too. You look as if you wanted to."

With a magnificent grin and a glad exclamation of, "You'se just right, Massa Victor," Erebus doffed the shirt and trousers which constituted his habiliments, and, standing in the sun, a perfect model for a sable Hercules, waited for the boys to lead the way into the water.

The bath was most invigorating, and Ernest entered so thoroughly into the enjoyment of it that, not content with swimming and splashing about in the

neighbourhood of the ledge, he started across to a bit of rock that jutted out a hundred yards away.

"I'll race you round that rock," he called to Victor, who was a little way off from him, but equally near the indicated goal.

"I'm too lazy to race," responded Victor, rolling over luxuriously on his back.

"Better not go so far, Massa Ernest," called out Erebus warningly. "Dere might be sharks round here. Dunno, but dere might."

Victor did not hear this, having let his head go under just at the moment, or else he would have supported the negro's advice.

But Ernest, with characteristic recklessness, only shook his head, and kept on. He was a strong, fast swimmer, and very proud of his skill in the water.

Erebus said nothing more, but going ashore, took his sheath-knife from his belt, and then hastened after Ernest.

"Big knife's a bery good thing when dere's sharks knocking round," he murmured to himself.

It was a superb sight the way the huge fellow clove his way through the water. He seemed more like some aquatic animal than a human being.

Ernest, glancing back and seeing him coming on, shouted out in jovial challenge,—

“Come along, you steam-engine. I’ll give you a dime if you beat me now.”

As he had full twenty-five yards’ start, the chances seemed in Ernest’s favour, despite the negro’s great superiority as a swimmer.

But before he had got much more than half-way to the rock, Victor, who had gone ashore to watch the race, gave an agonized shout of,—

“Shark! shark! Oh, look out for him!”

Though Ernest did not hear the warning cry, Erebus did, and, glancing ahead, saw the triangular fin of a big shark cutting swiftly through the water as the horrid creature bore down upon Ernest.

“Massa Ernest! Massa Ernest!” cried the negro frantically. “Turn dis way, please. Dere’s a shark a-comin’ after you. See!”

Ernest heard him at once, and, giving a startled look around, saw the hateful black fin rushing at him.

All thought of the race vanished in an instant, and, turning about, he swam back towards Erebus with all his might.

The negro, on his part, put forth his utmost strength to reach him, while Victor, standing on the

ledge, utterly unable to render any assistance, watched with consuming anxiety this thrilling three-sided contest.

It was of short duration. Erebus got to Ernest some yards in advance of the shark.

"Swim away, massa," he panted. "I'll fix him."

His sheath-knife was in his mouth, but he changed it to his right hand, and, as Ernest passed him, he stopped swimming to set up a tremendous splashing.

At this sudden commotion the shark halted in astonishment, and Erebus, seeing his chance, sank beneath the water, diving in the direction of the man-eater.

When he rose again it was the shark that was splashing violently, and a keen eye might have detected a tinge of red in the smother of foam the monster made.

The negro's face shone with triumph.

"By golly but I did gib it to him!" he spluttered; and then raising the gory knife he shouted to Victor, whose pallid features were already being suffused with the radiance of joyful relief, "Dat's de medicine for sharks, massa; he won't want another dose."

Erebus did not boast prematurely. The gaping gash he had made in the shark's stomach banished

all hunger for a meal on human flesh, either white or black, and the monster hurried away to recover from its fright and injury.

“Good for you, Rebus,” cried Victor warmly when the negro landed. “You did that just splendidly. I’ll tell father about it as soon as we go back.”

“Yes, indeed you did,” panted Ernest, as soon as he recovered his breath. “You just saved my life, and I can’t thank you enough for it; but I’ll do as much for you some day, if I get the chance.”

Erebus flashed his eyes and his teeth in keen enjoyment of these compliments. He was well satisfied with himself, and fully realized the advantage it would be to him to have rendered such timely service to the “young massa.”

Having had quite enough of the water for that time they put on their clothes, and, at Victor’s suggestion, climbed to the highest point on the island to see the view.

Victor was first at the top, and the moment he looked out to sea he gave a start, and turning round to the others called out,—

“There’s a cruiser out there! and she’s watching the *Flamingo*!”

“Confound it, so there is!” exclaimed Ernest,

when he reached Victor's side. "But aren't we all safe?" he asked anxiously. "She can't touch us here, can she?"

"I don't think so," answered Victor. "Let's hurry back to the steamer."

Away they ran at full speed, and, arriving on board much out of breath, found Mr. Sinclair studying the cruiser's movements through his binocular with an expression of considerable anxiety in his face.

"Can they come in and capture us, uncle?" cried Ernest, stumbling up the steps of the bridge in his haste.

Without taking his eyes off the Federal ship, Mr. Sinclair growled out,—

"That depends on their commander, Ernest. He can take us easy enough, if he's willing to run the risk."

The *Flamingo*, piled to the rails with cotton, was certainly a rich enough bait to tempt many a man to brave the consequences of breaking the law of nations. In reality nothing but the English ensign waving lazily in the gentle morning breeze stood between the Federal commander and a prize whose proceeds would fill his pockets. There was no fort on the little island, nor means of defence of any kind.

For a long time the cruiser hovered near, keeping

those on board the blockade-runner in a fever of uncertainty. Mr. Sinclair, indeed, had serious thoughts of unloading his cotton at the island, and trusting to be able to come back for it later on. He felt sure that the Northerners would not dare to touch it once it was safely upon British soil.

Silas Fitch was moving about in a very restless fashion. When no one was observing him he would make faces at the cruiser and mutter,—

“Blamed fools! what are you waiting for?”

But when standing for a minute beside Ernest he took care to say,—

“She won’t come any nearer. They wouldn’t dare break the law. It would bring the British right down on them, and they don’t want that, I can tell you.”

Still the cruiser hung around, as if her commander were trying to summon up courage to push in and take his prize, whatever the law might be.

“I wish I had a good rifled gun here,” exclaimed Mr. Sinclair fervently. “A shell in her boilers might teach her manners.”

But there was no rifled gun at hand, and it would have been a crazy thing to use it if there had been. The only policy was to keep quiet, and as patiently as possible await the cruiser’s action.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE BLOCKADE-RUNNERS' RENDEZVOUS.

IT was well on in the afternoon before the cruiser gave up the watch. Then attracted apparently by the sight of a sail to the northward, for she took her departure in a great hurry, she raised the siege, to the unspeakable relief of the *Flamingo* folk, and the latter vessel lost no time in setting out for Nassau.

Keeping close to the reefs and islands all the way—for the deep-draught cruisers durst not enter these narrow, shallow channels even if they were willing to risk a violation of international law—the blockade-runner, a little before sundown, came safely to her destination, and her first voyage was successfully accomplished.

Nassau, the capital of the Bahamas, situated upon the small island of New Providence in the heart of the group, was at this time by far the most important

and interesting place in the West Indies, a prominence which it owed entirely to the American war.

Being a neutral port of easy access from Wilmington, Charleston, and Savannah, the three principal seats of blockade-running enterprise, it had been chosen as the rendezvous, where the blockade-runners unloaded their cotton and took on the cargoes of manufactured articles and "hardware" with which they returned to their beleaguered country.

Previous to this the people of Nassau, with few exceptions, had made a precarious and somewhat questionable livelihood by playing the part of wreckers, for which the situation of their island in the midst of a labyrinth of tortuous channels and hidden reefs, whereon many a goodly vessel was "piled up" year after year, gave them special advantages.

But when, by a freak of fortune, they became go-betweens, exceedingly well paid for making possible the exchange of goods between the Southern States and Europe, they found their new occupation vastly more profitable.

Just what her peculiar position meant to Nassau may be judged from the fact that while before the blockade-runners appeared the total of annual imports was less than three hundred thousand pounds, and of

exports less than two hundred thousand pounds, when the war was at its height the exports rose to over five million pounds, and the imports to over four million.

This marvellous increase in business of course filled the little capital with bustle and with money. It had none of the languor or the lazy, procrastinating ways of the ordinary West Indian city. All was stir, and striving, and reckless profusion.

The streets were thronged with men in the prime of life who seemed to be in the highest spirits, whether sober or drunk, and, as may readily be imagined, the amount of drinking done was little short of appalling.

There were shrewd, hard-headed men whose one idea was to feather their nests, whichever way the war ended ; and there were others who, in the warmth of their enthusiasm for the Southern cause, had put their last farthing into Confederate securities, confident of a cent. per cent. return for their investment.

Rollicking officers of blockade-runners and their drunken, swaggering crews, flinging gold pieces about like pennies, filled the hotels and lodging-houses with uproar, and made easy prey for the sharpers and thieves who had crowded to this rich field of plunder.

Northern spies in many disguises mingled with the

crowd, some moving among the merchants and the officers of the steamers, others pretending to be boon companions with the men, that they might find out the movements of the blockade-runners and report them to the Federal cruisers waiting in the offing.

Nor had the Southern men the field entirely to themselves. Nassau was open to the North as well as to the South, and quite frequently a cruiser would come in for supplies, or to confer with the United States consul, who bravely stayed at his post, although his position, owing to the tide of sympathy being entirely against the government he represented, was an exceedingly uncomfortable one.

When the *Flamingo* came to anchor, Mr. Sinclair called Victor and Ernest aside, and said to them,—

“Now, boys, for the next few days I’ll be so busy that you won’t see much of me, and you’ll have to look after yourselves. I want you to be very careful where you go and what you do. The place swarms with scoundrels, some of whom wouldn’t think twice about knocking you on the head if they thought you had a full pocket. Keep a sharp look-out and a civil tongue all the time you’re ashore, and it might be just as well to have Rebus not far off if you’re ashore at night. Do you understand me?”

"Oh, yes, sir; we'll do as you say," chorused the boys, who in their eagerness to see the place and its sights were quite willing to promise anything.

"By the way," Mr. Sinclair added, "Fitch tells me he knows Nassau pretty well, having been here a couple of years ago. He'll take you around, if you like."

Victor at this made a wry face, and whispered to Ernest,—

"No Fitch for me, if you please."

But Mr. Sinclair, having delivered his mind, was already giving his attention to something else, and did not notice how his son received his suggestion.

When he left them, Victor said in a tone of unmistakable decision,—

"Erebus is all right; he can come along. But I won't have that fellow Fitch on any terms."

"I don't see why you're so down on him," Ernest expostulated. "I like him very much; and if he knows all about Nassau, wouldn't it be a good thing to go with him?"

"If you like him so much then," snapped back Victor, a flush of temper colouring his sallow cheek, "you go with him, and I'll take Rebus."

"Oh, come now, Vic," answered Ernest with un-

ruffled good-humour, "you needn't fire up like that. I'm not going to split with you for the sake of Fitch, you know that well enough."

"Of course I do, Ernie," responded Victor with that wonderful smile which was the chief charm of his otherwise plain countenance; "but somehow that chap Fitch gives me the same kind of feeling as a snake does. I can't say just why."

"All right then, Vic, we'll go without him," returned Ernest. "We can have a good enough time by ourselves."

The *Flamingo* had anchored at first not far from the lighthouse at the mouth of the harbour, keeping well away from the wharves, as Mr. Sinclair did not want to be overrun with visitors until he was ready for them.

Impatient to land, the boys stood on the bridge noting the details of the scene before them—the low-lying, palm-fringed shore, with its stunted shrubs, white-walled houses, and dazzling coral sands, all ablaze in the sunshine. They were amused with the antics of the little silver-fish that kept perpetually leaping and springing along the smooth surface of the water; they inhaled with delight the soft and perfumed air; and they joined in hoping that Mr. Sinclair's

business would keep him for some time at so interesting a place.

Presently their attention was fully taken up by a swarm of boats which beset the steamer, filled with negroes of both sexes, grinning, clamorous, importunate. They had bananas, alligator-pears, pine-apples, cocoanuts, shaddocks, and other tropical fruits for sale, and they vied with each other in vociferous praise of their luscious wares.

The commotion raised by these fruit-vendors was astounding, and, to prevent any of them attempting to get on board, Mr. Sinclair stationed Erebus at the gangway with a big belaying-pin, instructing him to use it freely if necessary.

Remembering that Erebus was a slave, while the people in the boats were "free niggers," and therefore in point of law as good as the commander of the vessel, it was amusing to see the impassive dignity of the one, and the cringing submissiveness of the others.

"Now you jest behabe youselves dere," Erebus called out, bringing his belaying-pin down upon the bulwark with a significant bang. "Quit you foolin', do you hear? It's gemmen from de Souf dat you's a-dealin' wif now, and you'd better jest look out."

As he spoke, a mischievous brown girl sitting in

the stern of one of the boats threw an orange at him, intending that it should fall into his hands. But her aim was better than she knew, and it hit him full in the face.

The boys broke out laughing, but Erebus was furious. He did not mind the slight blow from the orange, but he did feel the implied insult to his dignity.

"Who frew dat orange?" he roared, looking around the crowd of boats with an appalling expression of fierceness.

Instantly there arose a chorus of, "She throwed it!" "Dat's de girl!" "I see'd her!"

Many fingers were pointed at the poor girl, who, overwhelmed at the consequences of her innocent bit of fun, shrank into the stern of the boat, covering her face with her hands.

When he saw who had been his assailant, and how contemptibly eager the others were to tell upon her, Erebus' feelings underwent a sudden change. The anger vanished from his sable countenance, and assuming a most gallant manner, he said,—

"Tank you for your nice present, miss; and now you jest bring your boat right up to de gangway, and de young massas'll buy your fruit."



*"Tank you for your nice present, miss."*



Then with a glance of lofty contempt at the occupants of the other boats, he shouted, "Clear de way for dis lady now ;" and he waved his belaying-pin so threateningly that, much against their grain, the rival vendors made way, and allowed the girl's boat to get to the gangway. When they came to buy, the boys were surprised at the purchasing power of their money. For a small bit of silver they could procure more fruit than they could eat in a day.

Finding the fruit so cheap, they bought a large quantity, and distributed it among the sailors and stokers, who were very glad to have a "blow-out," and fully appreciated the treat.

Erebus' "fair" *protégé* sold out all her stock, and went away smiling sweetly upon her champion, whose interest she had so oddly aroused.

Early next morning the *Flamingo* moved closer inshore, and moored alongside a wharf. Here her cotton was to be discharged, and her cargo and coal for the return trip to be taken on board.

The wharf was soon crowded with curious onlookers—sailors, soldiers, English officers wearing white linen hats, with long flaps over the shoulders to keep off the hot sun, merchants and brokers ready for bargains, and free negroes without number.

Mr. Sinclair was at once called upon by numerous agents anxious to have the handling of his business, but he was in no hurry to commit himself. He would first look about him, and make sure of the disposition of his cotton to the best advantage before a bale of it was landed.

He was not long in finding a firm to his satisfaction, men whose credit and connections left nothing to be desired, and then the unloading of the *Flamingo* proceeded apace.

Masters of their own time, the boys busied themselves in "doing" Nassau and the country round about.

Erebus usually went with them. Suspicious characters of many kinds abounded, and after their first visit ashore they decided that it would be just as well to have the big fellow at hand. If any emergency should arise, his enormous strength, backed by the revolver and bowie-knife that he knew so well how to use, would be very welcome.

They had good proof of this one evening when they had been listening to the band playing in front of the barracks. The cool night air had been delightfully refreshing after the heat of the day; the music rendered by a fine British band was attractive and

inspiring ; and the handsome officers gracefully paying court to the ladies who had come out in their most becoming costumes, excited the boys' admiration so that they took no count of time.

"Hullo!" at length Victor exclaimed, after a glance at his watch ; "why, it's getting on to eleven o'clock. We must be going back to the *Flamingo*."

"Oh, don't let us hurry," pleaded Ernest. "It's so lovely and cool here, and it's so fearfully hot on board," and he stretched himself out luxuriously upon the bench.

"Well, we'll stay until the band stops," said Victor. "It certainly is ever so much nicer here than on the steamer. How would you like to be an English officer, Ernie?"

Ernest looked thoughtfully at the stalwart bronzed men, who presented so imposing an appearance in their brilliant uniforms, and who seemed so entirely at ease with themselves and the world about them.

"I'd rather be a Confederate officer, Vic," he replied ; adding with a sigh, "though our officers never have a chance to look half so fine as those fellows. But they can fight just as well, can't they?"

"Indeed they can," responded Victor, drawing himself up as if he were taking his place at the head of

a company. "If they were only fitted out like the Englishmen, the Yankees would soon be licked out of their boots." Then after a pause he went on, "Next to being a Confederate officer I'd like to be a British one. I think they're a splendid lot of men.—But come along, lazy bones. The band's just beginning to play 'God save the Queen,' and that's the signal for everybody to go home."

Quite reluctantly they left the barrack square, and turned their steps seaward. Late as the hour was the streets were full of people enjoying the cool evening air, and in no hurry to go into their hot, close dwellings.

Erebus sauntered along in their rear. He was enjoying himself no less than they were, and quite appreciated the advantage of being bodyguard for the "young masses." It gave him an amount of freedom from less pleasant tasks that was very much to his taste.

The water-side streets were lined with drinking-places which did a roaring business in every sense of the word. The boys would have avoided this quarter of the city had they been able, but it was necessary to pass through it in order to reach the wharf beside which the *Flamingo* lay.

"I can't see why men want to make such beasts of themselves," exclaimed Victor, in a tone of profound disgust, as they passed two brawny sailors lying side by side in the gutter like pigs in a sty. "Why can't they leave the rum alone if they don't know when they've got enough? Faugh! you'll never catch me making such a fool of myself."

"Nor me either," chimed in Ernest. "Just look at that poor fellow they're kicking out of that place!"

There had evidently been a big row in one of the saloons, as a consequence of which a drunken sailor, whose bruised and bleeding face showed that he had got the worst of the *mêlée*, was being hustled out into the street, in spite of his fierce resistance and shocking profanity.

"They've got his last copper, or they wouldn't fire him out that way," said Victor bitterly. "They'd do the same with us if we were fools enough to give them the chance."

Through such scenes they made their way to the wharf, and were just at the head when a cry of "Help! help! they're killin' me!" rang out on the night air.

"That sounds like Marsden's voice," cried Victor,

peering anxiously through the gloom in the direction whence the appeal for aid came.

Marsden was second engineer on the *Flamingo*—a reckless, roistering sort of fellow, though an excellent officer.

“Dat’s Massa Marsden, sure,” said Erebus, joining the boys as they stood in some uncertainty as to what to do.

“Let’s help him,” said Ernest impulsively, starting towards the struggling knot of men whence the cries came.

Loth to get mixed up in a midnight brawl, as well as apprehensive of some consequences to themselves, Victor hung back; but Erebus saying, “I’m wif you, Massa Ernest,” and hastening after him, he changed his attitude, and all three hurried to their shipmate’s support.

As they afterwards learned, Marsden, having had a good time in his own way on shore, was returning to the steamer, tacking to port and starboard in a fashion that plainly betrayed how he had been supping not wisely but too well, when he was set upon by a quartette of “beach-combers,” as the riff-raff of Nassau were called, who wished to relieve him of any balance of his pay still remaining in his pockets.

Marsden was not so drunk as to take such an aggression meekly, and being a stout fellow, and clever with his fists, had made a good defence, until a dastardly blow from behind knocked him over; and it was the cry he had uttered as the scoundrels were throwing themselves upon him that reached the boys' ears.

Picking up a bit of a broken oar that his eye lit upon, Erebus, breathing out vengeance on the footpads, rushed upon them so quickly and yet so quietly that they had no warning of his approach until his club smote two of them, felling them senseless to the sand.

"Take dat! and dat!" snorted the ebony giant as he dealt his mighty blows, while Victor and Ernest gazed at him with swelling admiration.

Startled by this sudden onset, the beach-combers let go of their intended victim to look after themselves, and at first evidently thought of taking flight. But they saw hurrying towards them several of their fellows who had been attracted by the commotion, and at once they raised a cry of,—

"Yanks! Yanks! give it to the Yanks!"

In the darkness they had mistaken the *Flamingo* folk for the Northerners who were so unpopular at Nassau.

Down came the reinforcements, and Erebus had just time to set Marsden on his feet, and put the broken oar in his hands, before they were within striking distance. Here, however, they suddenly halted, and not without good reason. They were confronted by the huge negro, his face blazing with wrath, in his right hand a heavy revolver, and in his left a gleaming knife.

The sight was certainly one calculated to make them pause, and, furious as they were at being cheated of their expected prey, they had no taste for either bullet or bowie-knife.

"What for you call us Yanks?" demanded Erebus, taking advantage of their hesitation. "We ain't no such trash," he went on, with fine scorn in his voice. "We come from Charleston, we do, and dat's our steamer, de *Flamingo*, what's just run de blockade."

Realizing that they had indeed mistaken their men in a double sense, and that under the circumstances the sooner they made themselves scarce the better, the beach-combers, without attempting any reply, slunk rapidly away, leaving the two that Erebus had knocked over still lying on the sands.

"What about those fellows?" Victor asked of Erebus, pointing to them with his foot.

“We’ll just leab dem where dey are, Massa Victor,” said the negro. “Dey’s got a nice soft bed dere, and when dey wake up dey’ll know better dan to be foolin’ wid us folks—eh, Massa Marsden?”

Marsden, who had not fully regained his senses, clouded as they had been by drink and the blow on the back of his head, muttered out something about,—

“Right you are, Rebus. Let’s go aboard.”

There was nothing better for them to do, so they hurried on to the steamer, the boys not stinting their praise at Erebus’ exploit; and Marsden, as he pressed into his hand his last gold eagle, saying thickly,—

“You’re mighty good nigger, Rebus. If I ever get the chance to do as much for you, I won’t forget it, take my word for it.”

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE EXCHANGE TO THE "GREYHOUND."

MR. SINCLAIR'S expectations as to the sale of his cotton were more than realized. What had cost him only twopence halfpenny per pound in Charleston was already worth one shilling and sixpence per pound in Liverpool, and he had no difficulty at all in getting one shilling and threepence per pound for it at Nassau.

Now the *Flamingo's* cargo comprised some five hundred bales of the best "Middling Uplands," each bale weighing nearly five hundred pounds. His gross profit therefore on the whole amounted to twelve thousand pounds sterling, or sixty thousand dollars.

This was very satisfactory indeed, and considering that he stood to make an equal, if not greater, profit on his return cargo, he might well have been supposed to be content.

But such was not the case, as he explained to the boys when the three were sitting together on the deck one evening before turning in. He began by asking a question.

"Would you be sorry to say good-bye to the old *Flamingo*, my boys?" he said, glancing along the deck of the little steamer.

"Why, yes," responded Ernest promptly. "You're not going to sell her, are you, uncle?"

"I have some idea of it, Ernie," returned Mr. Sinclair.—"What do you say, Victor?"

"If you can get a better and a bigger steamer in her place, it would be a good thing," answered Victor, whose active ambitious spirit led him to anticipate what his father was about to make known concerning his plans.

"I think I can, Victor, and I've about made up my mind to exchange," said Mr. Sinclair. "It will take all the profit on this first trip, and more, too; but I see there's a mint of money to be made in this business, and there's no time to be lost if it's to be done."

"Can you get the other steamer here, uncle?" inquired Ernest, his regret at parting with the *Flamingo* yielding to his boyish curiosity concerning the new vessel.

"Yes; she's in port now, and I've got to say whether or not I'll take her to-morrow morning," responded Mr. Sinclair.

"May we go and see her in the morning?" asked Victor; "I'm getting excited about her."

"You can come along with me when I go," said Mr. Sinclair. "She's a rattling good craft, if I'm any judge."

Fitch coming up at this moment the talk changed, and the boys went to their bunks full of the idea of having a finer and faster steamer on which to run the blockade back to Charleston.

In the morning they went to inspect the proposed purchase. Much to Victor's disgust, Silas Fitch accompanied them. He hung about the gangway when they were getting into the boat, looking so eager to go that Mr. Sinclair felt bound to ask him to come along, although he would have preferred being without him.

The vessel they were to visit lay at anchor in the middle of the harbour, and they rowed out to her in one of the *Flamingo's* boats with a couple of sailors as oarsmen.

"There she is," said Mr. Sinclair, indicating the largest of three vessels a hundred yards away.

"What do you think of her?"

"She's a beauty!" cried Ernest enthusiastically; "and isn't she big!"

"She looks like a clipper to go," said Victor, taking the more practical view of her.

"And she'll carry a big lot of cotton," added Fitch, licking his lips, and letting a greedy gleam show in his eyes as though this meant very much to him.

Rowing alongside they went on board, where a bluff Britisher in a blue coat with many brass buttons and a blue peaked cap received them in hearty fashion, and invited them into the cabin for a glass of wine; which hospitality, however, Mr. Sinclair declined on the ground of its being too early in the morning to be "liquoring up."

They were then taken over the steamer, and allowed to examine her thoroughly.

She was certainly a fine craft, and admirably adapted for blockade-running.

Built on the Clyde to run as a packet between Glasgow and Belfast, she had after some years of satisfactory service been brought out to Nassau by a speculative sea-captain, who, although he had no notion of braving the perils of blockade-running on his own account, was quite willing to turn an honest

penny by disposing of his vessel for that risky business.

He had accordingly stripped the *Greyhound* of her handsome saloon and comfortable cabins, extended her cargo accommodation, and increased her coal-carrying capacity to the utmost, besides making other necessary changes.

Her spars had been reduced to a light pair of lower masts without any yards, the only break in their sharp outline being a small crow's-nest on the foremast, to be used as a look-out place. The hull, which showed not more than six feet above water, except at the paddle-boxes, was painted a dull grey colour, to render her as nearly as possible invisible except in broad daylight. The boats were lowered square with the gunnels, and the funnel made telescopic so that it could be brought down almost to the level of the deck.

Her engines were four times as powerful as those of the *Flamingo*, and capable of driving her at the then very high speed of fourteen knots an hour, while her bunker capacity was such that she could carry sufficient coal for the run to Charleston and back.

It did not take the boys long to make up their minds concerning the *Greyhound*.

"Oh, how I hope uncle will buy her!" was Ernest's

exclamation, his love for the *Flamingo* being quite overcome by his admiration for the new vessel.

"If he does we'll be millionaires before the war's over," said Victor confidently. "There's not a Yankee cruiser afloat as fast as this steamer."

"Perhaps not just now," Fitch interposed. "But you know they're always having new cruisers built, and they're getting them faster all the time."

Victor took no notice of the remark; but Ernest, who could not bear to seem discourteous, responded cheerily,—

"Let them go ahead. If this steamer isn't fast enough, we'll get another that is, that's all. We're in this business to stay—aren't we, Vic?"

Victor nodded assent without speaking, and moved off to another part of the deck under pretence of looking at one of the boats. Hold converse with Fitch he would not, and the latter, giving him a sinister glance from under his eyebrows, went away just as Mr. Sinclair came up attended by the *Greyhound's* owner.

"Well, boys," said he heartily, "what do you think of this craft? Come here and give me your opinion."

"I think she's just splendid," shouted Ernest, as if Mr. Sinclair might be a little hard of hearing.

Smiling at his earnestness, Mr. Sinclair turned to the other.

"Do you agree with him, Victor?" he asked, and there was a degree of respect in his tone that showed in what estimation he held the judgment of his quiet, thoughtful son.

Victor's face was illuminated by the spirit of daring enterprise as he replied,—

"With this steamer, father, we can do anything, and I hope with all my heart you can manage to buy her."

"Do you hear that, Captain Mainbrace?" laughed Mr. Sinclair, turning to the British captain. "There's nothing left for me now but to buy your old hulk, is there?"

"Not if you value the good opinion of your boys, Mr. Sinclair," returned the captain; "and they know what they're talking about, too. The *Greyhound's* not to be beat in these waters."

"Come ashore with me then, and we'll go up to my agents and see if we can settle on terms," said Mr. Sinclair. "You're pretty stiff in your price, you know."

The boys looked at each other with gleeful faces. In their minds the *Greyhound* was as good as pur-

chased, and they already began to regard her with eyes of ownership.

As soon as they returned to the *Flamingo* they called Erebus up and told him the news.

"Just think, she can go fourteen knots an hour," cried Ernest. "It'll puzzle the Yankees to beat that, won't it?"

"And she can carry nearly two thousand bales of cotton," added Victor, never forgetting the practical side of the matter.

"By golly, but ain't dat splendiferous!" exclaimed Erebus explosively, rolling his eyes and flashing his teeth in evidence of his delight. "Fourteen knots an hour, and two thousand bales of cotton! Tell you, we'll hab de berry finest blockade-runner dat floats when we get dat air steamer."

With great impatience they awaited Mr. Sinclair's return, and the moment he appeared assailed him with questions as to whether the purchase had been made.

For a little while he amused himself parrying their eager inquiries and teasing them with indefinite replies. But at last he made their hearts glad by admitting that the *Greyhound* was now in his possession.

He had disposed of the *Flamingo* for twice as much as she had originally cost, and with this money, and the proceeds of his cotton, and some advances from his agents, who were only too glad to be permitted to have a share in his enterprise, he had purchased the *Greyhound* outright, and as soon as he could get her loaded, would set out again for Charleston.

All on board the *Flamingo* received the news with great satisfaction. The very narrow escape they had had from the swift cruiser into whose hands they would inevitably have fallen but for the timely advent of darkness had made clear to them that they could not always find safety in flight, and they were delighted at the prospect of being transferred to a larger and faster vessel, able to show her heels to anything afloat.

The next day the *Greyhound* hauled in to the wharf at which the *Flamingo* lay, and the work of changing from the one vessel to the other was begun.

As the *Greyhound* would require a much larger crew than the little steamer, Mr. Sinclair engaged as many of the former's best men as were willing to join him, thus bringing his equipment almost up

to a fighting figure. In fact he had some such intention in his mind as he added the new men to the steamer's articles. At all events he was quite determined, if the occasion arose, to make a much more vigorous defence of the *Greyhound* than he would have ventured upon with the *Flamingo*.

In spite of the dismantling she had suffered, the new acquisition offered far better quarters for both her owners and her crew than the other vessel had done, and the boys took possession of their state-rooms with warm approval of their advantages.

"We can live like gentlemen now," said Victor, "instead of being crowded up like chickens in a coop."

"Poor old *Flamingo*!" sighed Ernest, whose tender heart still mourned at the parting with the dear little steamer on which he had spent many happy days. "She was comfortable enough until she became a blockade-runner, but she certainly was a tight fit for us after the change. Well, I hope she's in good hands, and that the Yankees'll never get hold of her."

"We've made a good exchange of it anyway," said Victor. "Only just think of it—we can carry two thousand bales of cotton every trip; which means,

the way cotton is selling now, a clear profit of two hundred thousand dollars not allowing for expenses!"

It was certainly an inspiring prospect, and the two boys had good excuse for indulging their fancy in the construction of certain castles in the air whose delights were to be shared with the dear ones at home.

One evening shortly after the exchange to the *Greyhound*, Ernest went up to the city on his own account. Victor had one of the headaches which sometimes troubled him, and preferred remaining on board.

The band was to play at the barracks, and Ernest strolled thither, feeling in the best of humour with the world and himself.

He found the usual crowd gathered on the square, and dropping into a seat in a corner, amused himself watching the play of the social life eddying before him.

Although quite at his ease in society, he had not yet begun to pay court to the ladies. But he held the sex in high respect, and took great interest in observing their "tricks and their manners." Some day, no doubt, he would be losing his heart to one of them.

"They're fine fellows, those Britishers, and no mistake," he soliloquized, looking with frank admiration at the English officers, who evidently were the ladies' chief attraction. "I wish they'd come right out on our side of this war. We'd soon knock the Yankees into smithereens if we had old England at our back."

He was but voicing the thought of the whole Southern Confederacy in saying this. The active aid of Great Britain was the thing most longed for by the revolted states, and the hope of it buoyed them up in the darkest hours of their fierce struggle for supremacy.

While he sat there in the shadow, two men drew near engaged in close conversation. Ernest was quick to recognize one of them—it was Silas Fitch; and beginning to feel somewhat lonely, he felt glad at having a companion for the walk home.

Prone to act upon the impulse of the moment, he sprang up, saying jovially,—

"Here we are again! Are you soon going back to the steamer?"

A less significant salutation could hardly be imagined, yet it had a most surprising effect upon Fitch. He started as if he had been struck a

blow, and had the light been stronger, even unsuspecting Ernest could hardly have failed to notice the look of guilty confusion that overspread his features.

"Hullo, Ernest!" he stammered; "what on earth did you jump out on a fellow like that for? You pretty nigh scared the life out of me. Yes, I am going back to the ship soon. I've just another word to say to my friend here," and he turned to his companion to mutter something in a low tone; whereupon the other bade him "Good-evening," and sauntered off without taking the slightest notice of Ernest.

This proceeding struck the boy as being rather odd, not to say rude, and he was inclined to ask some questions; but Fitch, having recovered his composure, started off to talk at a rapid rate, vouchsafing in a casual way the information that his companion of a moment ago was an officer from the British man-of-war then in port, whose acquaintance he had made that evening.

Now Ernest's idea had been that the officer looked more like a Northerner than an Englishman; but not knowing any reason why Fitch should lie to him in the matter, he accepted his statement without

question, and soon dismissed the whole matter from his mind.

Had he only known the truth, it is very certain that Fitch would never have set foot upon the *Greyhound's* deck again.

Day by day the loading of the *Greyhound* proceeded apace. Her cargo was a marvellous miscellany of dry goods, groceries, boots and shoes, medicines, blankets, cutlery, etc., and, most important of all, certain mysterious cases marked "Hardware."

Under this seemingly innocent yet perhaps sufficiently suggestive title were concealed the munitions of war that the Confederacy so sorely needed. Rifles, bayonets, swords, cartridges, caps—the term "Hardware" covered them all; and although according to strict law the British Government should never have permitted this traffic to go on—for neutrals had no business supplying such wares to belligerents—the trade in war supplies continued briskly to the end of the rebellion, producing great profit to the English manufacturer and merchant.

The start from Nassau was made at dusk, that part of the month having been chosen when the moon would serve by keeping herself out of sight.

There were many spectators on the wharf to see

the blockade-runner off, and a hearty cheer followed her as she swung gracefully around and headed for the mouth of the harbour.

The boys took their places on the bridge beside Mr. Sinclair, the only other person there being the pilot.

Because of the fear shown by the pilot of the *Flamingo* when the cruiser came so near capturing her, Mr. Sinclair had replaced him by a man whose reputation for courage was unquestioned.

Hank Thayer hailed from New England, and such sympathies as he allowed himself to indulge in were with the North, but he was too shrewd to permit that to interfere with business. His intimate knowledge of the Atlantic coasts and the West Indian waters admirably qualified him for piloting blockade-runners, and the high remuneration of eight hundred pounds sterling for the trip to Charleston and back quieted any qualms of conscience.

Of course if he were taken by a Federal cruiser it would go very hard with him. He could not hope to conceal his being a New Englander, and the authorities would show him little mercy.

But all this he had taken into account.

The eight hundred pounds overweighed every other

consideration, and he might be trusted to defy or evade capture until his last resource was exhausted.

"Good-bye, dear old *Flamingo*!" said Ernest, with a bit of a sigh, as the little steamer went out of sight in the dusk.

The flickering lamps along the quays, the lights sparkling on the beach, the leaping flames of the beacon at the mouth of the harbour, successively faded away in the rear as the *Greyhound* passed onward into the darkness. For some hours she skirted the coast, keeping well within the three-mile limit where no cruiser could touch her; then as midnight drew on, she turned away from the protecting shores, and stood out to sea.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE RUN ACROSS.

THE night was as fine as could be desired. A slight heat haze obscured the horizon, but the deep blue vault of heaven shone bright with stars, and the sea beneath, as if not to be outdone in splendour, broke into phosphorescent flame at every motion of its waves.

Even the keen sense of danger—for, once Abaco Light was left behind, they were in the hunting-ground of the cruisers—did not blind those on board the *Greyhound* to the beauty of the scene.

As the swift steamer, going at her full speed, rushed through the yielding ripples, she bore a crown of fiery foam at her bow, and left a trail of molten gold in her wake.

“Isn’t this simply glorious!” exclaimed Ernest, leaning over the bow to watch the glittering wave rolling back on either side like a furrow from a plough.

"The *Flamingo* never could go through the water like this. I hope some cruiser will chase us; it'll be such fun running away from him."

"Don't be too cocky, my boy," said Victor. "There may be cruisers as fast as this steamer, although the pilot says he's never heard of any; and then, you know, one shot from one of those big Parrot guns might end the business for us—especially if it hit us where the engines are."

"Oh, of course it would be better to escape the cruisers altogether!" Ernest returned, "but I suppose there's little chance of our doing that; there's so many of them between here and Charleston."

The night passed without any ship being sighted, but soon after dawn the look-out reported one to windward, and the *Greyhound's* course was changed so as to give it a wide berth.

Swift as his vessel was, Mr. Sinclair would take no risks. No doubt many of the steamers reported from the crow's-nest were harmless enough; some of them, probably, were blockade-runners themselves, and valuable information might have been obtained by hailing them.

But all alike were carefully avoided, the *Greyhound* dodging and doubling on her course in a way that

would have suggested an intoxicated steersman to a spectator ignorant of the reasons for this curious conduct; now stopping altogether to let some dangerous-looking steamer pass on ahead, and again doubling right back upon the way she had come as if intending to return to Nassau. Under Hank Thayer's skilful management the blockade-runner not only went without a challenge throughout the day, but even succeeded in making good progress towards her destination.

It was of course intensely exciting for those on board. Mr. Sinclair had laid in a liberal supply of telescopes and binoculars, and aided by these the occupants of the bridge and after-deck were constantly scanning the waste of water. No vessel could possibly approach from any quarter without being discovered before her hull rose above the horizon.

The sun sank behind a bank of fog that showed up dimly on the western verge, and shortly after sunset the wind fell until there was a perfect calm.

"I'd as lief the breeze had stayed and the fog hadn't come," said the pilot, with a manifest deepening of the anxious expression which his well-bronzed face had worn all day.

"Why, don't you think the fog will be a great

advantage to us?" responded Mr. Sinclair in some surprise. "It'll prevent our being seen by the cruisers, you know."

"You're right enough there, sir," returned the pilot. "But you've got to take into account the fact that the same fog will prevent our seeing the cruisers; and bein' as it is, I'd a big sight sooner have a clear night, and trust to keepin' a smart look-out."

The accuracy of Hank Thayer's view was soon established. On through the shadowy silence rushed the *Greyhound*, the enshrouding fog and the cool night air having sent all below save those who were on duty.

It was not the wisest kind of seamanship this driving at full speed through a fog, but neither captain nor pilot could take that into account. They were making a good course for Charleston, thanks to having no cruisers to dodge, and every hour of full speed was precious.

Suddenly there sprang out of the heavy gloom ahead a huge phantom shape that seemed to tower up right in the *Greyhound's* path.

With a half-smothered shout of alarm the pilot put the helm hard a-port, and signalled to the engine-room for the wheels to be reversed.

"Oh," cried Mr. Sinclair, "we've run right into her clutches!"

At the same moment a stentorian challenge came from the cruiser:—

"What ship's that? Heave to at once, or I'll fire on you!"

Not the length of a pistol-shot separated the two vessels. A shell from a Parrot gun at that distance would make short work of the blockade-runner.

The pilot turned to Mr. Sinclair, his rugged features set in an expression of stern determination, while a strange light flashed in his deep-set eyes.

"Just leave the *Greyhound* to me, sir, and don't ask any questions. We've got one good chance anyway," he said.

Mr. Sinclair put out his hand and grasped Hank's thorny fist.

"I've perfect confidence in you; do your best."

"Full stop there below!" was the order that went to the engine-room, and in obedience to it the paddle-wheels ceased to revolve.

In the meantime those who had gone below for the night came tumbling up on deck, among them Victor and Ernest only half dressed, and much bewildered by

the sudden awakening from the sound sleep they had been enjoying.

“What’s the matter?” cried Ernest as he clambered up the steps of the bridge, holding his trousers on with one hand and rubbing his eyes with the other.

For answer, Mr. Sinclair pointed silently to the great hull of the cruiser showing dimly through the gloom, on which lights were now flashing, and from which the sound of the boats being lowered could be plainly heard.

“Oh, we’re captured!” groaned Ernest, his heart sinking at the ominous sight. “What will we do?”

“We’re not captured yet,” cried Victor with great spirit. “Why don’t we try to get away? Tell them to put on full steam, father; that cruiser couldn’t catch us.”

Mr. Sinclair shook his head.

“Keep quiet, Vic. The pilot’s the man to give orders now. He’ll do the best he can for us, you may be sure.”

“But, father,” persisted Victor, his face glowing with indignation at what seemed to him so tame a surrender, “why can’t we try to get away at least?”

Silas Fitch was standing near with a very curious expression on his sallow countenance. It was not one of alarm, nor even of concern, but of anxious eager-

ness, as though something which he wished greatly to happen might not take place.

"They'd knock us to pieces with their big guns if we tried to escape now," said he. "It's too bad we couldn't see her in time to get out of her way."

There was a contemptuous curl on Victor's lips as, without looking at Fitch, he replied,—

"I'd rather take my chances of them doing that than give in at once like this."

In the meantime the boats were being lowered from the cruiser, and coming toward the blockade-runner. Two were sent off, each containing a dozen men. The pilot watched them with clinched teeth and gleaming eyes. He had not spoken since his last order to the engineer.

The boats came swiftly on, the men in them laughing boisterously with one another over their good luck. The taking of a well-loaded blockade-runner meant lots of prize-money, and they had good reason to be jubilant.

By dexterous management Hank Thayer had brought the *Greyhound* into such a position that she was right astern of the cruiser, and the two vessels were stern to stern.

In almost unbroken silence those on board the

blockade-runner awaited the approach of these boats. Mr. Sinclair had not altogether despaired of escape being effected somehow, yet he had no idea what the pilot's plan might be.

As silent and stern as the sphinx, the pilot stood on the bridge beside the binnacle, while the boats came dancing over the water until they were more than half-way across the space separating the two steamers.

Then Hank Thayer's face lit up, and his hitherto impassive frame became instinct with action.

"Full speed ahead!" he roared down the tube to the engine-room.

Instantly the order was obeyed. The great wheels began to beat the water furiously, as though eager to make up for their inaction; the swift steamer promptly responded; and before the commander of the cruiser could realize the situation, the *Greyhound* was disappearing in the darkness.

A red flash and a heavy report bespoke his indignation at this unexpected ruse; but he could only bring his small guns at the stern to bear until he wore ship, and by that time the fog had once more enveloped the *Greyhound*, so that further firing would have been only a foolish waste of powder.

"Ah, that was magnificent!" cried Mr. Sinclair, giving the pilot a sounding clap on his broad shoulders. "I had not the least notion what you were driving at, but I see it all now. You shall have twenty pounds extra for that, Hank."

The pilot allowed his grim features to relax into an expression of gratified pride. He had been pleased at his employer's faith in him, and the brilliant success of his stratagem filled him with satisfaction.

"They couldn't very well leave their own boats, ye see," he said, waiving all reference to Mr. Sinclair's praise and promised reward. "I knew I had them there, and the thing was to get this steamer astern of the cruiser so that they couldn't let fly a broadside at us when we started ahead."

His face glowing with triumph, Victor turned to say something to Fitch, but he had disappeared. He had no desire that the others should know how he took the clever escape from the cruiser's clutches, and had gone to the stern to relieve his feelings in some strong language addressed to the steamer's wake.

Victor then went up to the pilot, and holding out his hand, said gracefully,—

"I want to apologize for thinking that you were

going to let us be taken without trying to get away. I'll know better next time."

"That's all right, my lad," responded Hank, giving him a hearty grip that made him wince. "Ye see, it don't do to prophesy unless ye know ; and I didn't want to give my little dodge away until I knew just how it was goin' to take. You may jest bank on this—that Hank Thayer's not going to get into the grip of those Northerners so long as there's the smallest kind of a crack for him to creep through."

There was not much more sleep for anybody on board the blockade-runner that night. The boys, after a while, went back to their bunks, and did ultimately succeed in getting a nap before breakfast ; but the men were too excited by the brush with the cruiser to settle down, especially as no one knew when another of the enemy might put in an appearance.

By morning the fog had entirely disappeared, and the day was bright and clear. When the pilot took his reckoning, he was a good deal perturbed to find that they were much nearer their destination than he had imagined or intended. In fact, a few more hours' steaming would bring the *Greyhound* right into the midst of the cordon of cruisers guarding Charleston Harbour.

It seemed that he had allowed a much wider margin for detours and delays than had been necessary; and there was no alternative now but to lie off and on through the long day, waiting for the protection of night before attempting to run into port.

"I tell you what it is, captain—a good smart fog would come in mighty handy just now," said the pilot to Mr. Sinclair. "We'll have to keep our eyes peeled this day. Those blamed cruisers are bound to show up, and we may have to scoot clear out to sea again to shake them off."

"Hadn't we better do that at once without waiting for the cruisers to find us out?" suggested Mr. Sinclair. "A day longer in making Charleston Harbour won't matter, you know."

"That would be just jumping from the frying-pan into the fire, I'm thinking, sir," replied Thayer. "We'll have to lie to where we are for the present, and see what turns up."

The sun shone in cloudless splendour, and only a light breeze rippled the surface of the sea. All who were not on duty below gathered on the *Greyhound's* decks, alert, watchful, anxious. In the crow's-nest the keenest-eyed sailors succeeded one another hour after hour. On the bridge the two

boys talked with Mr. Sinclair, or paced restlessly from side to side. The whole atmosphere was surcharged with suppressed excitement. How devoutly everybody longed for darkness !

Presently the look-out reported smoke in the offing, and the *Greyhound* slipped away in the opposite direction as fast as possible.

From that on there was neither pause nor peace for the blockade-runner. Now it was a frigate, looming up large and stately, showing herself plainly long before the low-lying sea-coloured *Greyhound* was visible to her ; then a merchant ship creeping along before the light breeze ; or again a sloop-of-war, sharp and wicked-looking.

For not one quarter of an hour was the horizon entirely clear, and the steamer was kept constantly busy steering off to one or other point of the compass.

Victor and Ernest hardly left the bridge. They were each provided with a good telescope, and in the midst of their nervous anxiety they managed to derive some diversion from a friendly rivalry as to which would sight the vessels first, keeping score of their respective successes.

"I don't think I'd like to go in for blockade-running as a profession," said Victor, after the excite-

ment of sighting an unmistakable cruiser and running away from her had subsided. "It's too wearing on the nerves by a long chalk. Don't you think so, Ernie?"

"It is that," responded Ernest emphatically; "a little of it will go a long way with me. But I mean to stay by the *Greyhound* so long as uncle does. Since they won't let me into the army, it's the next best thing I know of."

"I wonder if father will keep it up more than one season?" mused Victor. "You see, if he makes three or four trips without being caught, he'll be a rich man again; and then perhaps he'll not want to run any more risks."

"What do you think they'd do to us, Vic, if they did catch us?" asked Ernest, his face growing grave at the idea of falling into the hands of the Federal authorities. "Would they put us in prison until the war's over?"

"I guess that's what they'd do," replied Victor,— "unless we were lucky enough to get exchanged for some of the prisoners taken by our people. They often do that, you know."

"Oh dear! I hope we won't be taken, anyway," sighed Ernest fervently. "But if we are," and here

he drew himself up in a resolute way, "I'll show no white feather, I can tell you."

One after another the anxious hours dragged on until evening drew near, and preparations began to be made for the run into Charleston.

By means of careful soundings and excellent charts, Hank Thayer had ascertained his position exactly; and as he knew the hour when the tide was at its height on the bar, he was able to fix the precise time for darting into the harbour.

The decks were cleared of everything that had the faintest hint of white about it. Indeed, the pilot, in his anxiety on that point, suggested that Erebus should keep below decks, lest the white of his eyes and the gleaming ivory of his teeth might betray his presence. But as the negro strongly protested, the matter was compromised by his promising to keep his mouth shut tight, and not to roll his eyes more than was absolutely necessary.

Night fell clear, but happily not calm, a sufficiently strong breeze blowing to smother the sound of the blockade-runner's paddle-wheels. Under full speed the steamer tore through the water straight for her desired haven.

Other vessels were being sighted every few minutes,

but as none of them lay directly in the *Greyhound's* path, and as her invisibility except at a short distance could be safely depended upon, she held on her course unhesitatingly.

Victor went in quest of Erebus, and having found him, said in a low tone,—

“Rebus, I want you to keep a sharp eye on Mr. Fitch. You remember what happened before when we were running the blockade?”

The negro nodded, grinning meaningly.

“Well, I’ve my suspicions of that fellow, and believe he’s up to some mischief. Don’t let him know you’re watching him, but keep as near him as you can until we’re safe in Charleston.”

The giant’s fist tightened into a significant grip, and an ominous light gleamed in his great eyes.

“You may jest bet your sweet life, Massa Victor, Rebus’ll hab a sharp look-out; and if dat fellow’s up to any more of his tricks—”

The negro left the consequences to be imagined; but in view of his devotion to the Sinclairs’ interests, and the fury of which he was capable when aroused, there was no doubt they would be serious enough.

On rushes the *Greyhound*, each fresh sounding showing shallower water. Every minute is precious

now ; for if the gauntlet be not run before the tide turn and the day break, neither speed nor skill will be of any avail.

Presently there becomes visible ahead a faint indefinite something, which soon resolves itself into the outline of a large vessel lying at anchor, her head to the wind, and a faint light at her bow.

Hank Thayer's eye brightened.

"We've just hit it right, sir," he said to Mr. Sinclair. "That's the flagship, if my old eyes are good for anything. She keeps about two miles off the mouth of the harbour, and always shows a light to her own ships."

In another minute the whole line of blockaders was in sight, all under way, and gliding quietly to and fro in the darkness.

"We'll just slip in between the flagship and the cruiser to the right," said the pilot. "It's now or never, sir. Let no one speak or show a light."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### SAFE INTO PORT.

IN suspense sharpened to the point of pain those on board the *Greyhound* waited for the issue. Save for the firemen and the engineers below, and the pilot on the bridge, there were no duties to be performed, though the men all stood ready to spring at the first command.

The blockade-runner was shrouded in absolute darkness; even the binnacle light had been extinguished.

"I reckon there's no need of the compass when I've got all those marks to take my bearings from," said Thayer grimly, pointing to the dark forms of the watchful cruisers.

Swiftly and steadily the good *Greyhound* cut through the crisply-curved waves that seemed to be welcoming her daring approach. The fact that the wind was blowing off shore meant very much, as it

took away all risk of the beating of the big paddle-wheels making itself heard on board the Federal ships.

Five minutes more of intensest though suppressed excitement, and still the cruisers were as dark and silent as shadows. The *Greyhound* was now but a hundred yards from the line made by the flagship and the cruiser next her on the right.

"If we can only pass 'em before they sight us, we'll do it finely, sir," said the pilot, his sinewy hands gripping the wheel until the muscles stood out like bands of steel.

At that moment a gleam of light was seen to flash out from the blockade-runner's bow. Once, twice, thrice it shone, and then there was darkness again.

"What's the meaning of that?" cried Mr. Sinclair, forgetting for the moment the necessity of silence.

"It means there's villany aboard," growled the pilot, his face darkening with rage. "See to it, sir, at once."

Mr. Sinclair sprang down from the bridge and rushed towards the bow. He was ready to kill the man who had betrayed him if he caught him red-handed.

But he was too late to reach him. Ere he had

got half-way, a short scuffle ending in a wild cry of terror and despair broke the stillness, and was followed close by a shout of triumph from Erebus.

"I'se done for him," yelled the negro. "He won't try any more such rascally tricks on dis steamer."

The giant was telling the truth. In obedience to Victor he had kept Silas Fitch under ceaseless watch. The latter, trusting to everybody's attention being absorbed in watching the cruisers, had made his way to the bow, as he imagined without being observed, and at the proper moment had flashed a small bull's-eye lantern towards the flagship.

It was a daring thing to do, the chances of detection by the men he was betraying being so great. But he was willing to risk them for the sake of the rich reward that would be his if the *Greyhound* were captured; for, in truth, he was a Northern spy, and had all the time fully merited the dislike and suspicion which the discerning Victor had entertained towards him.

So silently had Erebus shadowed him that he knew nothing of his proximity until the moment after he sent the signal.

Then, just as, exulting at having done his work, and congratulating himself that no one on board knew of

it, he dropped the lantern over the side, he felt the mighty arms of the huge negro around him.

"What do you mean? Let me go, will you?" he hissed, putting forth all his strength to free himself.

"I done saw you," hissed back Erebus. "I'se got you, and I won't let you go."

In their fierce struggling they stumbled over a bit of chain lying on the deck, and in trying to recover his balance Erebus loosened his grip for an instant.

Seizing this advantage, Fitch struck him a cruel blow between the eyes and broke away from him.

Instantly, however, Erebus was after him again, and in attempting to evade his onset Fitch sprang on to the bulwark, intending to leap down again past his would-be captor. But his right foot failed him, and just as the negro's great hands were about to grasp him, he went over sideways into the foaming water, uttering as he fell the cry that had so startlingly broken the silence on shipboard.

There was no time to see as to his fate. Before the facts could be explained to Mr. Sinclair, the *Greyhound* had shot ahead a long way; and moreover, Fitch's signal having been seen on board the flagship, the flash and report of a gun told that the crisis had come.

The blockade-runner had just passed between the two cruisers when she was betrayed.

"They'll find it no easy job to wing us," said Hank Thayer with a grim smile. "But they'll waste a lot of powder on us just the same."

"Let them fire away," responded Mr. Sinclair; "we'll not give in now until we're sinking or stranded."

Those on board the *Greyhound* held their breath, and some ducked their heads as flash followed flash from both cruisers now, and the shot could be seen ricochetting across the water.

Happily, because of the darkness, and the high speed of the steamer, anything like good marksmanship was impossible. The Federal gunners did their best, but they had everything against them.

On dashed the *Greyhound*. Already the coast-line was showing up dimly ahead. The goal was getting very near. Surely she was to make it unscathed.

"Do you see that, sir?" asked the pilot, grasping Mr. Sinclair's arm, and pointing straight ahead.

A long line of white showed through the gloom, and even above the panting of the hard-driven engines a dull, deep roar could be heard.

"That's the bar, sir, and we're making it right smart. I never done a better job of piloting in the dark."

In spite of the shot and shell still falling around them, Thayer's voice already had the note of triumph.

A few minutes more the bar was reached. Straight at the barrier of boiling surf charged the good steamer. Now she is in its midst, and it is seething and hissing all about her.

"Will she strike? or is there plenty of water for her?" is the question that thrills Mr. Sinclair as he looks over the side into the wild confusion of waters.

To ground there right within range of the cruisers, and with the tide about to fall, could mean but one thing.

But such was not to be the *Greyhound's* sorrowful fate this time. As straight and true as a well-aimed arrow she shot through the smother of brine and sand, and a shout of joyous triumph, led by Mr. Sinclair, went up from her excited men as she left the breakers behind to enter the smooth water of the Ship Channel.

All danger was over now. They could afford to laugh and talk without restraint, and they felt very much like hugging one another in the exuberance of their relief and delight.

As the first rays of the rising sun fell upon her grey sides, the blockade-runner made her way past

Morris Island with its long banks of sand-bag batteries, which were duly saluted, and around Cummings Point into Charleston harbour.

Mr. Sinclair had ordered out all the bunting the short masts could accommodate, and the *Greyhound* looked very gay indeed, attracting much attention from the garrisons of the city's defences. They all understood what she had done, and rejoiced in her success.

Up through the yellow flood, now fast running seaward, past solid old Fort Sumter, pitted with shot-marks like the face of a man who has had small-pox, leaving Fort Johnson on the left, and Castle Pinckney's great round bulk on the right, the blockade-runner, with whistles blowing, flags flying, and everybody on board shouting at the top of their voices, drew in to the wharf, and her venturesome voyage was ended.

Her coming had already been announced by telegraph from Morris Island, and the wharves of John Sinclair's Sons were crowded with a concourse of expectant people—men, women, and children ; soldiers, citizens, and negroes—all cheering and shouting and laughing just as if they were personally interested in the success of the enterprise.

Among the throng were many members of the two

Sinclair families, and, the way having been cleared for them to come on board, there ensued such a round of embracing and kissing as Victor and Ernest had never been through in their lives before.

There was nothing to mar the joyousness of the occasion. All had gone well with the dear ones at home, and news had recently been received from Colonel Sinclair that nothing was amiss with him, and that he might be expected home soon on a brief furlough. They could therefore give themselves up without reservation to the rejoicings of the hour.

The *Greyhound* was unanimously voted the finest and fastest blockade-runner yet seen, and Mr. Sinclair received unstinted praise for his enterprise.

As for the proceeds of the cargo, even though he was too patriotic and kind of heart to hold out for the prices he might have obtained, the profits ranged from three hundred to eight hundred per cent.

Flannel shirts, whose wholesale price in Manchester was five shillings apiece, went off like hot cakes for as many dollars; heavy boots which cost ten shillings a pair brought twelve dollars; revolvers bought at two pounds each were snapped up at fifty dollars; while the blankets and "hardware" commanded the highest figures of all, being purchased *en bloc* by the

Confederate Government. In fact, the total profits realized after payment of all expenses were sufficient to pay off the balance due upon the *Greyhound*, purchase a fresh cargo of cotton, and leave a handsome surplus, which Mr. Sinclair proposed to remit to his correspondents in England for safe-keeping.

Victor and Ernest were great heroes among the boys of the city, not one of whom but deeply envied them their exciting experiences, of which they had to tell the story again and again.

Ernest quite enjoyed this. His tongue ran merrily all day long, and the eager questions asked of him were answered in full detail. But Victor soon wearied of the rôle of *raconteur*.

"Oh, go and ask Ernie," he would say, in a tone of profound boredom; "he'll tell you all about it. He thinks it's fun, but I don't."

Once when Ernie expressed some pity for Silas Fitch, and wondered if he had been drowned, or had perhaps succeeded in swimming to the cruiser, Victor flared out at him in a way that quite startled him and the rest of the little group of listeners.

"You don't know what you're talking about," he shouted, his eyes flashing and his slender frame quivering with passion. "The worst death in the

world would be too good for such a villain. I hope he was torn to pieces by sharks. Didn't I say over and over again that he should never have been allowed on board, but nobody would listen to me?"

Instead of finding satisfaction in being able to say, "I told you so," when Fitch's treachery had been discovered, Victor's wrath continued to burn, because all his warnings, now proven to be well founded, had gone unheeded.

"Just to think of that scoundrel being one of ourselves for so long!" he exclaimed hotly to his father. "If he hadn't got away from us as he did, he ought to have been given the lash first and afterwards shot."

"Oh, let him go, Vic," replied Mr. Sinclair, smiling indulgently at his boy's vehemence. "He didn't do us any harm after all, and he's paid for his villany with his life. We must be very careful, however, that no others of the same stripe get on board the *Greyhound*."

So soon as the first confusion and rush of business had passed, Mr. Sinclair one evening gathered the two families together at his residence, inviting also the chief officers of the blockade-runner.

When all had assembled and greetings had been exchanged, Erebus was sent for.

The huge fellow came attired in a brand-new suit of clothes, and looking very conscious and ill at ease. He had not the slightest inkling of what was to take place, nor had anybody else, for that matter, save the master of the house. From the markedly benevolent smile which Mr. Sinclair wore, however, it might be surmised that some pleasant function was in contemplation.

Erebus having made his best bow, stood just inside the door, changing his weight from one foot to the other, and fingering his hat with the restlessness characteristic of his race.

"Erebus," said Mr. Sinclair, in a tone that conveyed no hint of his meaning in asking the question, "have I always been a good master to you?"

"De Lord bless you, you hab, massa," responded the negro with fervent sincerity; "de berry best massa in all the Souf," and he rolled his great eyes and flashed his snowy teeth in support of his assertion, while a puzzled, anxious look came over his sable features.

"Would you like to leave my service, Erebus?" Mr. Sinclair asked again, his countenance continuing inscrutable, although every eye in the room was fixed upon him in wonder and curiosity.

The effect of this question upon the giant was startling. His great face filled with apprehension, his eyes threatened to start from their sockets, and rushing forward he threw himself on the floor before his master, crying in a voice broken with passionate fear,—

“O massa, good kind massa! surely you’re not a-going to sell Erebus?”

A deep murmur of indignation filled the room, and several members of his own family made as though they would protest against any such treatment of the favourite slave. But Mr. Sinclair with a wave of his hand commanded silence.

“Get up, Erebus,” he said kindly; “I said nothing about selling you.” Then, considering that he had kept his secret long enough, he went on: “I sent for you to-night, Erebus, not to sell you but to give you your freedom. You have won it fairly by faithful service since we left here in the *Flamingo*. Here are your papers. In the presence of these people, who are all your friends, I declare you my slave no longer.”

The face of the negro while his master was speaking thus presented a curious study. Surprise, incredulity, and deep concern succeeded one another in the play

of his features ; and when Mr. Sinclair had concluded, and held out the papers toward him, he put his hands behind his back, saying in a voice that was little more than a whisper,—

“Does you mean, Massa Sinclair, that you’s not a-going to keep me any moah ?”

“That’s entirely for yourself to say, Erebus,” answered Mr. Sinclair, smiling. “I will, of course, be very glad for you to continue in my service at fair wages, but you are not bound to do so ; you can engage with whom you please.”

The shadows vanished from Erebus’ countenance. It was all clear to him now.

“Just please keep dem dere papers, Massa Sinclair,” he said ; “I doan’t want dem now. I’m going to stay wid you so long as you’ll let me, and I doan’t want no wages.”

Mr. Sinclair laughed out heartily.

“Of course you can stay with me, Erebus—I’ll be only too glad to retain you in my employ—but you must let me pay you wages, all the same. I can’t have you work for me for nothing.”

The others now crowded about the negro to offer their congratulations upon his receiving his freedom. He was evidently still somewhat bewildered at what

had taken place, but, upon the whole, seemed considerably elated, and presently went away to spread the news among the "quarters," where he knew it would excite lively interest and envy.

"He'll never leave me so long as there's a breath left in his big body," said Mr. Sinclair when the negro had gone. "He's always felt himself to be a part of the family, and giving him his freedom won't make the slightest difference."

Victor and Ernest were extremely pleased at Erebus' good fortune. They thought the reward fully deserved, and in no wise grudged the loss of authority that it entailed.

They were both very busy now assisting Mr. Sinclair in the office work connected with the disposal of the cargoes. Victor took kindly to this; he had a good head for figures, and easily mastered details. But Ernest thought it all an awful bore. For accounts and invoices, ledgers and journals, he cherished a cordial aversion. The confinement of the office was irksome to him, and he seized every excuse for being down on the wharf, where the *Greyhound* was a centre of continuous bustle.

The inward cargo had just been cleared out, and preparations were begun for putting in the cotton,

when a report came from the Morris Island batteries that suspended all operations for the time.

It was to the effect that the Federal fleet off the harbour had been strengthened by the addition of a number of new ironclads, and that a determined attack on the city was to be made at once.

This was serious news indeed, and Mr. Sinclair's face grew very grave when it reached him. The capture of Charleston would mean not merely his ruin, but a blow at the Southern cause which might prove fatal.

The thought of loading up hastily and getting away before the attack should be made did occur to him, but he dismissed it from his mind with scorn. There was not much that he could do on behalf of the Confederacy, but he certainly was not going to desert the cause at all events.

Without stopping to count the cost, he hastened to the authorities and placed the *Greyhound* at their service.

"Give me a first-class rifled gun," he said, "and I'll have a brush with the Yankees myself."

But there were no guns to spare, and he was fain to be content with his steamer being used as a dispatch-boat if necessary.

On a beautiful spring morning word came up to the city that the Federal fleet was forming in line of battle. Mr. Sinclair at once had steam up on the *Greyhound*, and, accompanied by the two boys and Erebus, went down the harbour to Fort Sumter. There they disembarked, and the steamer returned to her wharf to await further orders, while they remained to witness the coming conflict.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE NAVAL ATTACK ON CHARLESTON.

THE Federal fleet which advanced to the attack was composed of eight ships, all ironclads, and carrying between them thirty-three heavy guns. With two exceptions, they were of the monitor type, each one being armed with one 15-inch gun, and one 11-inch.

The two exceptions were the *New Ironsides* and the *Keokuk*. They were both experiments in marine architecture—the former somewhat resembling a flat-roofed house upon a raft, and carrying the huge armament of fourteen 11-inch guns, and two 150-pounder rifled guns; the latter having two turrets instead of one, in each of which were two 11-inch guns.

Strongly as these vessels were constructed, and excellent as was their equipment in every way, their venturing to the attack of the Southern city was none the less a very plucky if not rash enterprise.

The defences of Charleston at this time were of the most formidable character. The harbour fairly bristled with cannon along its shores, while its waters were obstructed with piles and booms, and had in their turbid depths terrible torpedoes capable of blowing the bottom out of the stoutest ship afloat.

Early in the afternoon the little fleet made its way carefully and steadily up the channel, the *Weehawken* in the van, and others following close. They moved slowly, for their deep draught made it necessary to keep strictly to the channel, and moreover a cumbrous torpedo-catcher rigged on the bow of the *Weehawken* caused much delay.

So soon as they came within range, the batteries on Morris Island opened fire. But the monitors made no response. They were reserving themselves for Fort Sumter, the instructions being to concentrate their fire upon the centre embrasure of the famous fort.

By three o'clock they were within gun-shot of Fort Moultrie, and then the battle royal began. The exigencies of the channel compelled them to take up their positions between Fort Moultrie and Fort Sumter, and to present perfect targets to the gunners on both defences. Consequently they were at once

exposed to a terrific cross fire; and as the Confederates soon got the exact range, they aimed with great accuracy.

Ensconced in one of the towers of Fort Sumter, where they were in nobody's way, and had a splendid view of the whole scene, Victor and Ernest watched every move in this brilliant engagement as closely as the clouds of smoke continually rising from the conflict permitted.

In spite of their natural antipathy to the Northerners, they were fain to admire and applaud the dashing bravery they displayed.

"Just look at that fellow, Vic!" cried Ernest, with boyish enthusiasm, as the *Weehawken* ran close up to the rope obstructions between the two forts, and turning a gun upon each, proceeded to pound away at their lofty walls with her heavy guns. "You'd think this was only a picnic for him, wouldn't you? I tell you those Yanks are not to be sneezed at. They'll take an awful lot of licking before they'll give in."

"You're just right, Ernie," replied Victor thoughtfully. "They're far pluckier than I ever gave them credit for. It must need nerve to be shut up in one of those turrets, and have the big shot banging

against the sides, no matter how thick the iron plating is."

"I'm sure I don't want to change places with any of them," said Ernest. "It's bad enough up here with one's ears like to split when the big guns go off, and this horrid smoke getting into your nose and down your throat."

"O Ernie," laughed Victor, "what kind of a soldier do you expect to make if you can't stand powder-smoke?"

"That's got nothing to do with it," retorted Ernest warmly. "If I were in the middle of the fighting, I wouldn't stop to think of the smoke or anything else; but when one's only looking on, it's very different. —Hullo! what's that?" he exclaimed, pointing to where the *Weehawken*, ably supported by the *Passaic*, *Montauk*, and *Patapsco*, was briskly engaging the two big batteries.

At the bow of the *Weehawken* the water suddenly leaped up as though an eruption had taken place below, and the heavy ironclad was seen to pitch violently for a moment or two, and then to move backward with all possible speed.

"They've set off a torpedo," cried Victor, clapping his hands gleefully, "and she's got it in the bow. That's one ironclad done for at any rate."

When the flagship made haste to turn about and head down harbour, it looked at first as though Victor were correct. But the vessel did not go far. A hasty examination showed that aside from straining the hull a little, the explosion of the torpedo had done her no great injury, and her brave commander did not think it necessary yet to retire from the scene.

As the excitement of the conflict increased, the boys could not stand being cooped up in the tower, mere idle spectators of the struggle. They burned with the desire to do something, and when Ernest said, "Say, Vic, let's go down where the cannons are, and see if we can't help somehow," Victor at once jumped at the suggestion. The offer of their services was promptly accepted. Many of the garrison had been killed and wounded by the Federal fire, the splinters of wood and fragments of masonry doing far more execution than the cannon-balls themselves. Mr. Sinclair had been at work for some time, helping at the magazine in the serving out of the ammunition; and when the boys presented themselves, they were forthwith detailed for duty as cartridge-carriers. This was work well within their powers, and they went at it vigorously, inspired by the feeling that they were sharing in the defence of their country.

The battle had now reached its height, and it was impossible to tell whether the attackers or defenders were getting the worst of it. The ironclads were being hard hit beyond a doubt, and in spite of their armour the heavy shot fired at such close range tore through their sides, carrying death and destruction.

One of the big ironclads, the *Keokuk*, in order to avoid a collision with the *Nahant*, ran ahead of the others, and was thus exposed to a terrific fire. Inside of half an hour she was struck no less than ninety times, nineteen shot piercing her hull at the water-line, while her turrets were fairly riddled.

Seeing that it was impossible to maintain the fight, her commander withdrew from the field of battle, whereat there was great rejoicing among the garrisons of the fort.

Later on, in spite of all efforts to save her, the great vessel from which so much had been expected went to the bottom off Morris Island.

But the damage and loss were by no means confined to the Northern side. The 150-pound shot, and the shells from the 11-inch guns which the ironclads carried, were hurled at Fort Sumter with tremendous effect.

Some of them smashed the masonry of the walls

into fragments, while others found their way through the casements, dismounting the guns and killing and wounding the gunners. More than one such catastrophe did the boys witness as they ran to and fro carrying cartridges, and doing any other duty that offered. Once, just as they were entering a casemate, a shell from the *New Ironsides* exploded with fearful effect, destroying the 8-inch columbiad, killing sixteen men, and wounding twelve.

Happily neither Victor nor Ernest was touched, but the sight before them when the smoke cleared away was so ghastly that at first they were overcome with horror, and moved by a common impulse they started for the interior of the fort.

But the cries and groans of the wounded called them back, and soon they were busy binding up wounds and bearing water to the sufferers, earning many a fervent "God bless you" from the poor fellows.

It was while carrying a pail of water to a casemate in which were many wounded that Ernest nearly lost his life. An 11-inch shell exploded with appalling force just as he entered the casemate. Instantly the whole chamber was filled with smoke and splinters and suffocating gas, followed close by the shrieks and groans of those who had been struck.

One fragment of shell striking a gunner who was standing in front of Ernest full in the chest flung him off his feet and against Ernest, who fell backwards, his head coming into such violent contact with the hard masonry as to render him insensible. There he lay, the blood from the gaping wounds of the dead gunner, whose body had been his shield, pouring over him, and seeming to be his own. Victor had been a little behind him, and thus escaped the danger. At once he was filled with anxiety for Ernest, and set about finding him. So great was the confusion, and so many were the casualties, that for some minutes he could see nothing of him. But presently he found him half covered by the body of the dead gunner, and to all appearances as bereft of life.

It was not according to Victor's nature to give way to loud lamentation, and though he really thought that Ernest had been killed, he made no outcry. Half carrying, half dragging the motionless form to the far side of the casemate where it opened into the interior of the fort, he ran for water, and having procured it, poured it over the boy's face, washing off the blood with which it was covered.

"He's not hurt here!" he exclaimed to himself,

hope coming back to his heart again. He then felt carefully and tenderly for wounds elsewhere; but reeking as Ernest was with gore, no proof could be found of its having come from his own veins. Just then Ernest opened his eyes, and looked about him in a dazed, wondering way.

"Oh, my head!" he groaned. "Am I killed?"

In spite of his stress of anxiety, Victor could not forbear a smile at the *naïve* question.

"Why no, Ernie," he answered soothingly; "of course you're not killed. Where are you hurt?"

"It's my head," moaned Ernest.

Lifting his head gently, Victor found an ugly gash at the back, from which the blood was oozing.

"All right, Ernie," he said briskly; "I've found the spot. I'll fix you in a second."

Washing the wound with great care, he bound his handkerchief tightly about it, and at once Ernest began to feel better. The cool water and the comfort of Victor's loving touch rapidly revived him.

"You're not hurt anywhere else, eh?" Victor asked. "There was so much blood on you, I thought you must be torn to pieces."

"There was a man in front of me," replied Ernest, trying to look about him. "He saved my life."

"Yes, poor fellow," said Victor, with a shudder; "I had to pull him off you. He was dreadfully cut up, and must have been killed instantly."

In the meantime the firing on both sides was lessening, and soon ceased altogether. The Federals had had enough. Not one of their vessels had been left unscathed, and although their gallant efforts to silence Fort Sumter failed of success, they could at least console themselves with the conviction that they had given the grim old citadel a terrible mauling.

For more than an hour they had braved the fire of some seventy heavy guns, and considering how close they had run to the forts, and how easy it was for the Confederate gunners to get good aim, it was remarkable that none of the ironclads were sunk at their stations. One of them, indeed, and the very one the Southerners most earnestly wished to destroy—namely, the *New Ironsides*—for an hour held a position directly over a boiler-iron torpedo, containing two thousand pounds of powder, which was connected with the shores by wires.

Knowing nothing of her danger, she lay there, bombarding the fort, while the Confederates were making every effort to explode the machine which

would have blown the bottom out of her. But the connection would not work, and the operator being suspected of treachery, was like to have fared hard in the hands of the disappointed garrison, when it was discovered, all too late to rectify it, that one of the wires had been severed by an ordnance wagon passing over it.

With Victor's assistance Ernest was able to return to the outlook where they had been at first, whence they watched the repulsed fleet retreating in good order.

"They've got lots of grit, haven't they, Vic?" Ernest said, with a note of sincere admiration in his voice. "To come right up to the forts like that, and stand such a whang-banging as they've been getting, it gives a fellow a different idea of the Yanks."

"Yes, it does," responded Victor heartily. "Nothing could be pluckier than the way they've acted; and," he added with a sigh, "it makes a fellow see how hard it'll be to beat them in the long run. They've got more men, and more money, and bigger guns, and better ships than we have; and if England doesn't help us, perhaps we'll get licked after all."

"Oh, don't say that!" exclaimed Ernest. "England surely will help us, and then we'll be all right."

Mr. Sinclair had given orders that as soon as the attack was over the *Greyhound's* boats should come down to bring them back, and they presently returned to the city to give an account of what they had seen.

Ernest's wound was painful enough, but in no wise serious, and very fervent was the thanksgiving of his family at his fortunate escape. His mother would fain have had him remain by her, and not be going into the dangers he did; but to have done so would have made him utterly miserable, and her loyal Southern heart sympathized fully with his eagerness to be having some part in the struggle. So she put a curb upon her feelings, and found comfort and strength in constant prayers for his preservation. She longed for the war to be over. It was all dreadful to her, yet, like other Southern women, she gave way to no vain repinings, but went about her duties, striving to be cheerful in spite of the anxieties and cares that wrung her loving heart.

When matters had once more settled down after the excitement of the attack and repulse of the Federal ironclads, Mr. Sinclair hurried on the completion of preparations for another trip. He was

determined that the *Greyhound* should carry every bale of cotton that could possibly be got on board, and so the skill of the stevedores in stowing was put to the test. They certainly did work marvels. Each bale was first reduced by hydraulic pressure to the smallest possible size, until in fact it became almost as solid as a block of wood. Then the hold was filled with these bales, laid the way of the steamer's length, each bale being put into place as regularly and exactly as bricklayer's work. When a tier had been laid, with the exception of an opening under each hatchway, wooden "toms" or blocks were inserted to which the patent worm-screw was applied. This machine exerted such tremendous power that the bales were driven back into about two-thirds of the space they first occupied. The room thus gained was then filled in with more bales, until the whole was packed so solid that not even a cockroach could have escaped being crushed.

Tier upon tier was laid in this fashion, until the hold could not take another bale, when the hatchways were filled in, and the hatches battened down not to be removed until the voyage ended. But this was not all. Every bit of room between decks was crammed with cotton, the spar-deck being so packed

that only narrow lanes were left leading to the cabins, the engine-room, and the forecastle.

Finally tiers were laid upon the main deck, tapering like a pyramid, until when at last the work was completed, and the bales firmly lashed in their places, the *Greyhound* looked very much as if she had been roofed in for a winter near the North Pole.

When the time came for starting, Mr. Sinclair was again overwhelmed with applications to be permitted to accompany him; but the only one he granted was that of a Southern senator on a mission for the government.

There were no changes in the crew, and Hank Thayer was of course on hand, ready to run the last risk rather than yield to capture. Erebus, his relation to Mr. Sinclair in no wise affected by his now being a freeman, looked bigger than ever in a fine suit of naval serge that became him admirably.

The last fond farewells having been said, the *Greyhound* dropped down below Fort Pinckney, where she had to submit to being searched and smoked. This ordeal was required by the Confederate authorities, lest there should be stowaways on board whose company was more desired at Charleston than their absence.

It was a disagreeable business; but Mr. Sinclair submitted loyally, and was well pleased when a diligent search revealed no runaways.

The waning moon would disappear altogether by eleven o'clock, and Hank Thayer had so planned his programme that they should go out at midnight with the ebbing tide. They would then have four clear hours of darkness in which to slip through the cordon of cruisers, and get as far out into the ocean as possible.

Leaving Castle Pinckney and Fort Johnson astern, the good steamer shot past the long white front of Fort Moultrie and the stern dark walls of Sumter.

All was silent on those walls, and far ahead were the cruisers moving watchfully to and fro upon their beats. Would the *Greyhound* ever see Sumter again? That was the question that stirred the hearts of those on board her as she sped down with the tide while the darkness deepened about her.

## CHAPTER X.

### A HOT PURSUIT.

SOON after the moon had disappeared, clouds came up over the face of the sky, blotting out the stars that had hitherto been shining with Southern brilliancy.

"I'm much obliged to them clouds," said Hank Thayer to Mr. Sinclair, as they once more stood side by side on the bridge, each man having the fullest confidence in the other, and in the good ship under their charge. "It can't be too dark to please me."

Very faint lights, which could not be seen far out at sea, were set on the shore for the guidance of the blockade-runners making an offing; and by bringing these into range, the right course for crossing the bar was obtained.

It had been decided to go straight out through the Swash Channel instead of down by the Main Ship Channel. There was perhaps a little more risk about

this in one way; but on the other hand, as the cruisers always came in closer on the very dark nights, the run through them could be more quickly made, and they were not likely to fire freely for fear of hitting one another in the darkness.

The *Greyhound* was now going at full speed. The thing was to be done with a rush this time, speed rather than strategy being relied upon for a safe running of the gauntlet. Soon the dull booming of the surf upon the bar became audible.

"We're just in time to get the high water," whispered the pilot, "and we'll need every inch of it. The steamer's as deep as I'd care to have her."

"Can you make out any of the cruisers?" asked Mr. Sinclair; "there doesn't seem to be one in sight."

"They're not hanging out any lights now," answered Thayer. "I guess they found it didn't pay. The blockade-runners got on to their game.—Hullo!" he added aloud, forgetting himself for the moment by reason of the sudden start; "what's that ahead?"

They had just crossed the bar, dashing through the hissing surf without touching the sand, and were heading straight out to sea, when there appeared a small black object on the water right in the steamer's course.

"It's a boat!" cried the pilot, throwing all his weight upon the wheel.

A boat it was, in truth—a rowing barge stationed at the outer entrance of the channel, in shallower water than the cruisers could enter, to signalize to them the approach of a blockade-runner.

But for Hank Thayer's instant changing of the course, the boat would have infallibly been cloven in two, and her crew crushed beneath the great paddle-wheels.

As it was, the steamer grazed it so closely that the crash of broken oars, and the shouts of the terrified men, told how narrow had been their escape.

What must have been the sensations of those half-dozen sailors as the great white avalanche of cotton shot out of the darkness so suddenly upon them, and came so near sending them all into eternity!

Seeing that they owed their lives to the pilot's prompt action, it seemed very ungrateful of them that, as soon as they recovered their breath, they should send up rockets to apprise the cruisers that there was a quarry for them to chase.

But of course they had to do their duty, and in spite of their fright they did it effectually.

The ever-watchful war-ships understood the signal

at once. Rockets flew hissing and sputtering towards the heavens. Lights flashed out quickly to north and south of the flying steamer, and presently the boom of a gun showed that her position had been made out by the Federal gunners.

"Heaven grant them a bad aim!" exclaimed Mr. Sinclair fervently. "If they succeed in hulling us, we'll have to stop. I'm not going to lose any lives if I can help it."

The excitement on board the *Greyhound* was so intense that no one spoke. Victor and Ernest were on the bridge watching the dimly-outlined cruisers with eager, anxious eyes, and wondering from which of them would come the next red flash and angry roar. Not far from them was the senator, who, having already seen service in the army of Northern Virginia, felt it incumbent upon him to affect an easy indifference to the danger so imminent.

Presently a shot came whizzing a few feet ahead of the *Greyhound*, and struck the water with a quiet splash.

"That's pretty firing," remarked the senator, with a smile of gracious approval.

Almost immediately another shot, striking a little short, ricocheted clear over the steamer, some of its spray splashing in the senator's face.

Without moving a muscle, he said, with a little more emphasis, "That *is* very pretty firing!"

His impassiveness seemed proof against anything. But he was only human after all.

A minute later a third shot, better aimed than its predecessors, crashed through the starboard bulwarks, and bursting in a cotton bale on the port side, set fire to it.

This proved too much for the senator. Exclaiming, "If that isn't the prettiest firing I ever saw, may I be confounded!" he sprang to his feet and made for the cabin, his interest in the marksmanship of the Northerner being entirely satisfied.

The burning bale was promptly flung overboard, and, a hurried examination of the shattered bulwark having shown that no serious damage had been suffered, the momentary panic passed away, and the *Greyhound* kept on her course without swerving or slackening speed.

There was no knowing how far the cruisers might follow her, although in a few minutes more she was out of range of their guns, whose heavy shot fell farther and farther astern.

When the boilers were almost priming over from the tremendous pressure upon them, the engineer sent

up to inquire if he could not ease off a little. Mr. Sinclair, after a brief consultation with the pilot, decided that it was safe to do so. The cruisers' lights were no longer visible, and there was little likelihood of there being any other Federal vessels further out to sea. So the tension on both engines and men was for a time relaxed, and the latter were free to congratulate one another upon the success of their dash through the line of cruisers.

Mr. Sinclair had one source of anxiety this trip that had not been present before. The question of coal was one of the most serious the blockade-runners had to deal with. By far the best fuel for their purpose was the hard anthracite coal of Pennsylvania. It not only had first-class steam-producing qualities, but it gave off little or no smoke.

Soon after the war began, however, the supply of this coal had been stopped, and the blockade-runners then had to fall back upon English coal, which they procured at Nassau. This made abundance of steam, but burned with great rapidity, and consequently a great deal had to be carried.

When leaving Nassau, Mr. Sinclair had not been able to obtain as large a quantity as he would have liked of this English coal, and being compelled to

use it freely on the run across to Charleston, he was not able to retain in the bunkers sufficient for the return trip. He was therefore obliged to fill up the bunkers with North Carolina coal of a very inferior quality, which gave off a power of smoke.

It was not more than the middle of the day after they left Charleston when the engineer appeared with a long face and the unwelcome announcement that the English coal was all gone.

"Never mind!" responded Mr. Sinclair cheerfully; "even with the poor stuff we have the *Greyhound* can show her heels to the best of them."

But in this assertion he was reckoning without his host, as became evident before long.

His boast was true enough so far as any of the vessels patrolling Charleston were concerned. But there had been lately added to the Federal fleet a couple of cruisers whose speed nearly matched that of the *Greyhound*, and these had been detailed for duty in the open seas, where they darted to and fro ever watchful for the chance to pick up a blockade-runner.

Still basking in the sunshine of successful escape, and flattering themselves that even if a cruiser should appear they could easily disappear before being sighted by the other vessel, the people of the *Greyhound* were

taking dinner comfortably in the cabin, when the disturbing cry of "Sail ho!" rang out from the man in the crow's-nest.

"Where away?" cried Hank Thayer, rushing up on deck, followed close by Mr. Sinclair and the boys.

"Right astern, sir, and in chase," was the still more disturbing response. Sure enough the glasses that were instantly pointed in the direction indicated revealed the royal of a large vessel just showing above the horizon.

The heavy smoke given out by the *Greyhound* had betrayed her, and she was in for a long, hard chase.

"If we only had our bunkers full of good anthracite, we might have some fun with that fellow," said Mr. Sinclair.

"May be, sir," answered the pilot; "but with the rubbish we've got it's more than likely he'll have some fun with us."

"Is there anything wrong with our coal?" asked Victor anxiously. "I thought we had the best there was to be got."

"So we have, Vic," replied Mr. Sinclair, with a grim smile. "But our best may not be so good as the cruiser's worst, and in that case the cruiser may have the legs of us.—Have you heard of any new vessels

being on the cruise, Thayer?" Mr. Sinclair went on, turning to the pilot. "That ship's overhauling us without a doubt."

"I did hear something from another pilot about some new cruisers being out," answered the pilot, "but he didn't seem quite certain. The way that chap's coming up on us, I'm inclined to think he must have been right."

It was a perfectly clear afternoon, the sun blazing brightly in a cloudless sky. A brisk breeze blew from the cruiser towards the blockade-runner, of which the former took advantage by spreading all his canvas. This also told in his favour; for the *Greyhound*, cumbered as she was with cotton, could not have hoisted sails even had she carried them.

Steadily, if not rapidly, the cruiser grew into view, until his whole hull showed above the horizon. He was square-rigged, and every stitch of his canvas was drawing to perfection.

"We've got to euchre him on that sail business," said the pilot, a deep shadow of concern darkening his countenance. "It's worth two knots an hour to him at the least."

The breeze came from the north and east, while the *Greyhound* was steering east by south. It was clear

that her chaser's advantage could be neutralized only either by working the blockade-runner gradually around head to wind, or edging away to bring the wind aft.

The former course meant going back toward the land, and thus not merely losing precious time, but incurring the additional risk of getting into the territory of the inshore cruisers.

It was therefore decided to edge away, and at the end of a couple of hours those on board the *Greyhound* had the satisfaction of seeing their pursuer clew up and furl his sails.

"Hurrah!" cried Ernest exultantly. "He's giving up. See, he's taken in all his sails."

"Don't ye holler till you're out of the woods, sonny," said the pilot, with a sardonic smile at the boy's premature jubilation. "He's not done with us yet by a long chalk."

Looking very crestfallen, Ernest went off to the other end of the bridge to hide his confusion. He was sensitive about being laughed at, yet his impulsive nature was often exposing him to what he hated.

Yard by yard the cruiser gained. "If nothing happens he'll be alongside of us before sundown, sir," said the pilot.

"I'm afraid he will," replied Mr. Sinclair. "Is there nothing we can do to increase our speed?"

Hank Thayer was silent for a few moments, buried in profound thought.

"I have it, sir," he presently exclaimed, with a sudden brightening of his rugged countenance. "There's some turps aboard, ain't they?"

"Turpentine? yes," responded Mr. Sinclair, the light on the pilot's face coming into his also. "Fifty barrels of the best ever made."

"Good!" cried the pilot, slapping his thigh with his thorny palm. "Open some barrels right away, burst a couple of bales, soak the cotton in the turps and pile it into the furnaces. If that don't make her hum, I'm mightily mistaken."

No sooner said than done. With feverish haste the bales were broken open, the barrels tapped, and buckets full of saturated cotton passed down into the fire-room.

Victor and Ernest entered heartily into this work, tearing great handfuls from the bales, and plunging them into the turpentine until they themselves were so splashed with the fiery stuff that they would have burned finely had they been thrown into the furnace.

Owing to the miserable quality of the coal they had been compelled to use, it being full of slate and dirt,

the speed of the *Greyhound* had fallen off seriously. Indeed when the cotton and turpentine were resorted to she was not making more than ten knots an hour, and her chaser was overhauling her fast.

Already a keen eye could make out the "big bone in the mouth" of the persistent pursuer, as the seamen call the white curl of foam under the bows of a vessel at full speed.

Not content with trying the cotton, Mr. Sinclair ordered the deck-load of cotton to be thrown overboard. It went sorely against his grain parting with such precious stuff, but even half a loaf would be better than no bread, and if he succeeded in saving what he had below decks he would still make a small fortune.

The effect of the saturated cotton was almost instantaneous. A few minutes after the first lot of it had been passed down to the fire-room, the chief engineer came up with radiant countenance to announce that he had a full head of steam on again.

"Good!" exclaimed Mr. Sinclair. "Just wait here a few minutes until we try the log."

On being thrown it registered ten knots as before.

"Let her go now," he said, and the engines were once more put to their maximum.

Ten minutes later the log was again thrown. Fifteen knots was its cheering report.

"That's a sight better," said the pilot. "We'll hold our own now, I reckon."

Hold her own the *Greyhound* did right enough, but more than that she could not do. She had evidently met her match in speed, and her only chance, barring some accident to the cruiser, was to keep on until night fell, and then give him the slip in the darkness.

"If we can keep out of his clutches until nightfall, he'll make nothing out of us this time, sir," said Hank Thayer. "I like the looks of that bank ahead there. We want to strike it about dark."

A heavy bank of cloud was lying along the horizon to the south and east, and in it the shrewd pilot saw a possible means of escape.

Just then the chief engineer appeared on the bridge with a face full of gloom.

"What's the matter?" cried Mr. Sinclair, at once apprehending trouble.

"Matter enough, sir," was the reply. "The burned cotton's choked the flues, and the steam's running down fast."

Here was a new and unexpected complication. With choked flues, and steam running down, what

was to be done? The cruiser was now not more than four miles astern, and manifestly gaining. If ever men longed earnestly for darkness, it was those on board the *Greyhound*. The one chance of escape left them, then, lay in that dark bank ahead.

Exhorting the engineer to do the best he could to keep the steam up, Mr. Sinclair stationed his two keenest-sighted officers with glasses, one of them on each paddle-box, directing them to report the instant they lost sight of the cruiser in the growing darkness.

The following minutes were of such intense, throbbing anxiety as happily does not come often in a lifetime. Not a word was uttered on board the *Greyhound*. The race now was not so much between the two vessels as between the Federal ship and the growing darkness.

Gaining on his quarry as he undoubtedly was, yet, at the same time, his great black hull became more and more difficult to discern. No longer was the big bone in the mouth to be made out.

And now a sudden flash leaped out from his bow, and a heavy report told that he thought he was getting within striking distance. The shot was well aimed, but fell short. Five minutes more, however, and the *Greyhound* would be well within range.



*"A hot pursuit—chased by a Federal cruiser."*



## CHAPTER XI.

### NASSAU ONCE MORE.

THE engineer had been directed to make as black a smoke as possible, and to be in readiness to cut it off instantly by closing the dampers when so ordered.

Another few minutes of agonizing suspense, and then at the same moment the two officers on the paddle-boxes called out,—

“We’ve lost sight of him!”

A dense volume of smoke was streaming far in the *Greyhound’s* wake.

“Close the dampers,” Mr. Sinclair shouted through the speaking-tube.

Hard a-starboard the pilot put the helm simultaneously.

The blockade-runner’s course was altered eight points, and away she went at a right angle to her previous one; while the cruiser, innocently following

up the smoke, did not wake up to the trick played upon him until further pursuit was out of the question.

"Thank God for the darkness!" ejaculated Mr. Sinclair fervently, as they gathered on the bridge to rejoice together over their deliverance. "I was afraid some of us were going to see the inside of Fort Warren before the end of the month. They must be feeling pretty sore on board the cruiser; but there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip."

It was well indeed for the *Greyhound* that no further pressure had to be put upon her that night, for so hard had the engineers been firing that the very planks on the bridge became scorching hot; and when the danger was over, all but the pilot were glad to get away from there to cool their wellnigh blistered feet.

Thanks to the cruiser having come up astern, the blockade-runner lost no ground in getting away from him, except for the diversion from her course when giving him the slip, and consequently the dawn of day found her more than two-thirds of the way to Nassau.

Barring mishap, it was quite possible to reach Nassau before night in spite of the difficulty with the coal.

The day passed quite uneventfully. Several ships

were sighted, it is true, and Ernest and Victor had a lively argument over the character of one of them—Ernest being positive that it was a cruiser, while Victor maintained that it was only an ordinary merchant steamer. But there was no threat of chase, and they were all getting to feel very easy in the mind, when, just as they came within the sphere of the Bahama Banks, a big vessel, of whose character there could be little doubt, put in an appearance.

Mr. Sinclair was inclined to make light of the cruiser's presence. The Bahamas were full in sight ahead, and it was only necessary to run in within a league of their shores to put any number of cruisers at defiance.

But Hank Thayer took a more serious view.

"There's a scant twelve feet of water over most of the banks," said he gravely, "and we're drawing full eleven, without taking into account them ugly customers," pointing out on a chart a multitude of little black dots which showed where the dangerous coral heads were nearly awash.

"Well, and what of it?" asked Mr. Sinclair, somewhat impatiently, for he did not catch the drift of the pilot's reasoning.

"Just this, sir," replied Thayer quietly. "If we

keep in too close, some of them points'll be going through our hull; and if we keep out too far, the cruiser'll snap us up. We're in a pretty tight place, sir, and no mistake."

"Between Scylla and Charybdis, so to speak," said Mr. Sinclair bitterly. "Well, if I've got to choose between running the *Greyhound* ashore and letting her fall into the hands of those Yankees off there, it won't take me long to decide."

The situation certainly was a strange one. Hardly a breath of wind stirred the hot air, which was a most fortunate circumstance, by the way. Far ahead stretched the Bahama Banks as smooth as a lake, and showing almost milk-white, save where dotted here and there by the black spots that spoke of coral reefs, whose jagged heads would pierce the iron plates of the *Greyhound* as if they were merely pasteboard.

Had there been a brisk breeze blowing, these perilous places would have been invisible; but in the timely calm they could be readily made out by the man at the mast-head, and reported in time to give them a wide berth.

Out beyond the shallow water was the cruiser, her deep draught making a nearer approach impracticable.

"Just wouldn't they like to run in on us, Ernie,"

said Victor, as the boys studied the big ship through their glasses. "If it wasn't for the reefs, perhaps they'd try it anyway in spite of the law."

"I'm glad we've got both the reefs and the law in our favour," laughed Ernest; "one of them might not be enough by itself."

It was cautious, careful navigation, that called for the utmost skill on the part of the pilot. The *Greyhound* moved forward at no more than half-speed, and even this was slackened when a "trade" cloud would for a time obscure the sun.

"Better be sure than sorry, sir," Thayer answered Mr. Sinclair, when the latter asked if they could not hurry up a bit.

The sight of the grim cruiser watching silently but remorselessly made him nervous. He felt as if it would be better to make a dash for Nassau at the hazard of striking the coral, than to be creeping along thus slowly with the chance of the Northerners plucking up courage to defy the law, and take the prize so temptingly within reach.

At last the time came when the blue water showed up ahead, and it was necessary to make a dash across the open sea to Nassau.

Then did the excitement on board the blockade-

runner rise to fever pitch. By virtue of her position she had a good lead of the cruiser; but if the latter were as fast a vessel as the one they had just escaped from, this advantage would soon be lost.

Not more than twelve knots an hour could be got out of the wretched Carolina coal, and the cotton and turpentine could hardly be again tried.

"We've got to cut and run for it now, sir," said Thayer, looking very grave; "and they'll be sure to try and wing us if they can."

"How long before we get within the neutral limit again?" asked Mr. Sinclair anxiously.

"We can do it in an hour if all goes well," answered the pilot.

With her engines once more working up to their highest notch, the *Greyhound* tore through the water towards New Providence, the island upon which Nassau stood, whose form could just be made out rising above the horizon.

Compelled by the coral banks to make a wide circuit before taking up the chase, the cruiser was full three miles astern by the time he had got into line.

"He won't make that up inside of less than an hour," said Thayer, with a somewhat more cheerful expression of countenance.

"And by that time we'll be within hail of the island, eh?" asked Mr. Sinclair.

"That's what I calculate," responded the pilot. "But we mustn't crow too soon."

They were getting so used to being chased now, that the intensity of excitement was abating somewhat; yet they were all anxious enough on board the *Greyhound* as the big cruiser came resolutely after them.

The water being amply deep for anything afloat, there was no need to continue the look-out for coral heads. The one thing to be done was to reach the safe security of the neutral limit as soon as possible.

"He doesn't seem to be gaining on us, does he?" said Ernest, who always took a sanguine view of things. "I've been watching carefully, and I don't think he is."

"Well, I do," responded Victor, whose keen eyes had been noting how surely though gradually the pursuer was growing more distinct. "You couldn't make out anything but just the hull a little while ago, and now you can see his bow-guns. He'll likely be firing one of them at us before long."

"That's so," replied Ernest, in a tone of sorrowful conviction. "What a pity something doesn't happen

to his machinery so that he'd have to pull up short!"

With alarming speed the cruiser gained, and when little more than a mile separated the two vessels, he opened fire with his bow-chasers. The first shot fell short, the second and third went to port and starboard.

"He's getting our range," said Mr. Sinclair. "The next ball will no doubt wing us."

Happily his prediction was not fulfilled. The heavy shot went whistling over the blockade-runner, dropping into the sea beyond with a significant splash.

In the meantime the island of New Providence was drawing steadily nearer, and presently the whitening of the water gave warning of shallower soundings.

The look-out was again sent to the crow's-nest, and a leadsman posted in the fore-chains with orders to ply his lead without pause.

"Aha! he's getting scared of the shallow water," exclaimed the pilot exultantly, pointing to the cruiser, who was now changing his course so as to run parallel with the *Greyhound* instead of astern. "Doubtless he draws five feet more water than we do, and can't afford to take any chances."

But if the man-of-war dare not take chances, his quarry would. The nearer she ran to the danger of striking a jagged coral head, the farther she would be from the peril of capture, and of the two Mr. Sinclair distinctly preferred the former.

"Keep in as close as you can, Thayer," was his instruction to the pilot; and so with destruction threatening to right and left, the doughty *Greyhound* kept on at top speed.

Their haven of refuge was now well in sight, and already they were beginning to yield to the elation of another escape, when a sudden shock sent a thrill of horror through every heart.

With a grinding crash whose sinister significance could not be mistaken, the blockade-runner struck full upon an unnoticed point of coral, and came to a sudden stop.

"Full speed astern!" shouted the pilot down the speaking-tube.

Instantly the big paddle-wheels began to churn the water violently, so that the whole frame of the steamer trembled with their vibrations.

But the bow did not budge from the reef upon which it was impaled.

"We're done for now," groaned Ernest, in a tone of

utter despair. "They've only got to come on and take us."

"Not a bit of it," responded Victor stoutly, his eyes flashing defiance at the cruiser, which began to slow up the moment the *Greyhound's* misfortune was observed. "They've not got us yet. Don't you be too down in the mouth."

"All hands to work to shift cargo astern," called out the pilot; and soon with feverish haste every one but those at the engines set to work to carry the cotton, and whatever else might be moved, down to the stern, which was soon piled as high as it could hold.

While they were doing this, two large boats filled with men were seen to leave the cruiser and come hurrying towards them, impelled by a dozen brawny oarsmen apiece.

The *Greyhound* was still a scant half-mile outside the neutral limit, and therefore liable to capture.

"Now then," commanded Hank Thayer, when everything possible had been shifted astern, "look sharp, all of ye, and make her rock all you know how."

By moving rapidly in a body from side to side, they made the *Greyhound* rock until her bulwarks almost dipped, and at the same time the paddle-

wheels kept pounding away furiously at the foaming brine.

It was a time of thrilling anxiety. The boats were rapidly drawing near. Ten minutes more at the farthest, and they would be alongside.

Aha! the *Greyhound* seems to move! But is it only to settle more firmly upon the cruel coral, or to free herself from its merciless grasp?

"She's backing!" cried Thayer, his sternly-set face suddenly becoming radiant. "Now she's off!"

He was right. The combined action of the paddles and of the vigorous rocking, added to the lightening of the bow, had succeeded, and once more the *Greyhound* was floating in clear water.

Ordering the engines full speed ahead, the pilot sheered off toward the shore, for to have steered the other way would have been to fall into the hands of the approaching Northerners.

"We must take our chances of striking something else, sir," he said to Mr. Sinclair, who nodded assent.

With a taunting cheer to the men in the boats, whose undisguised chagrin made the boys laugh heartily, the blockade-runner slipped away from them, and by great good luck reached the harbour of Nassau without further mishap.

There was, of course, some water in the hold, but not enough to cause any alarm, the pumps proving quite equal to mastering it.

Everybody on board was glad to see Nassau again. To Mr. Sinclair their safe arrival meant a profit of scores of thousands of dollars; to his men, pockets full of pay, and a chance to carouse to their hearts' content; and to Victor and Ernest, relief from the restraints and anxieties of shipboard, and freedom to roam about according to their inclinations.

One of the first things to be done was to ascertain the amount of injury sustained by the *Greyhound*. The cotton was accordingly got out of her with all haste, and on an examination being made it was found that several plates in the bow had been stove in, and cracked so that it would be necessary to replace them.

Now this meant a delay of some weeks, the facilities for such work at Nassau being very inadequate, and Mr. Sinclair did not at all like the idea of the boys knocking about such a sink of vice and iniquity as the Bahama capital then was with no occupation to keep them out of mischief.

After some cogitation over the matter, he called the boys to him one morning and asked them,—

"How would you like to take a trip to Cuba while we're waiting here to have the steamer fixed up?"

As with one breath Victor and Ernest answered,—

"Tip-top! Do you really mean it?"

"Yes, I mean it," responded Mr. Sinclair. "Nassau doesn't seem to me a particularly good place for boys just now, and I've been making some inquiries as to what you might do. I find there's a fine packet schooner that plies between here and some of the Cuban ports, making the round trip inside of a month, and it occurred to me that you couldn't do better than go with her. You'd see a good deal of the islands, and have a pretty fair time of it. You can take Erebus with you."

The plan approved itself to both boys instantly. They were already weary of Nassau, and the notion of a sailing trip to Cuba, the great island of which they had heard so much but never seen, was entirely according to their mind.

"Why, that's perfectly splendid!" exclaimed Ernest, always the first to speak. "We'll enjoy it immensely; won't we, Vic?"

"Of course we shall," said Victor, in his own calm way.—"And I am glad you can let us have Erebus; he's sure to be very useful to us."

The schooner was to sail on the following day, and with hearts full of joyful expectation the boys made their preparations for the trip.

They found the *Saucy Kate*, as the schooner was called, a well-built, handsome craft of one hundred and fifty tons burden, with a roomy cabin, in which they had a snug state-room with two berths.

The captain and the first and second mate were bluff Britishers ; but the crew, numbering six in all, was a queer mixture of nationalities, and not particularly prepossessing.

Upon the whole, however, Mr. Sinclair felt quite at ease in his mind as to sending the boys off under such auspices ; while they, with well-filled purses and tightly-packed portmanteaus, were in high feather, and impatient to start.

The *Saucy Kate's* first port of call was to be Cardenas, on the north side of Cuba ; and with a light though favouring breeze she set out upon her voyage, Mr. Sinclair waving farewells to the boys until they were no longer in sight.

The run across the Bahama Banks was altogether delightful. The wind was very variable, sometimes freshening into a moderate breeze, and again dying away into a calm.

But nobody minded much whether *Æolus* worked or idled. There was no hurry. On board were fresh meat, fowls, and ice in abundance. Delicious fish only waited for the hook in order to present themselves for the frying-pan; and with plenty to eat, and nothing to do in the midst of the marine paradise, who could not be content?

Erebus was in his glory. A true child of the tropics, the heat that made the white men lazy only inspired him with energy. A favourite amusement of his was to dive for the conchs which made such capital soup.

In these transparent waters the smallest object could be distinctly seen at a depth of three or four fathoms. When the schooner was becalmed or running very slow, Erebus, wearing nothing but a pair of thin cotton drawers, would take his station at the bow watching intently for his prize.

Sighting a cluster of conchs he would go overboard like an arrow, and diving down to the shells, seize one and sometimes two, returning with them to the surface, and pitching them on board before climbing up by the rope thrown to him by a sailor.

So expert was he at this, and so thoroughly at

home did he show himself in the water, that the risk of a mishap seemed not worth considering.

Yet one day while performing the feat to the admiration of the boys, he came very near paying dearly for his amusement.

In some way he had miscalculated the depth of water, and it was much shallower than he imagined.

Down he went with hardly a splash, so skilful was his dive; but instead of returning promptly, he remained down, lying motionless among the conchs.

"Oh! what's happened to Rebus?" cried Ernest, making as though he would spring into the water after the negro.

## CHAPTER XII.

### A TRIP TO CUBA.

“**H**OLD on a second! I’m with you,” exclaimed Victor; and the next moment both boys with a single splash shot down into the crystal-clear water.

They were almost as expert divers as Erebus himself, and at once caught him in their arms, rising with him to the surface.

The *Saucy Kate* was only drifting very slowly at the time, and they came up so near her that a rope thrown by the first mate was easily caught, and they soon were back on board.

The negro was still insensible, an ugly gash in the centre of his woolly pate, from which the blood flowed freely, making clear what had happened to him.

But after a few minutes, during which the boys were too full of anxiety to think of changing their dripping clothes, he came to himself, and gazing

around with a strange wild stare in his big eyes, spluttered out,—

“Ah! what’s de matter wid me?”

Then putting his hand to his head, and feeling the wound, which had not yet been bandaged, he added with a shrewd twinkle of fun in his face,—

“Mighty near split my head on dat trash ob a conch, eh? Dat’s where de good ob habin’ a thick head comes in. If it had o’ been your head, Massa Ernest, you’d ha’ been killed sure.”

“I’ve not a doubt of it, Rebus,” replied Ernest, laughing; “and so if somebody had to have their head split, it’s as well it was you. But you’ve had a narrow escape, and you mustn’t try any more of that diving for conchs.”

“Did you pull me out ob de water, Massa Ernest?” inquired the negro, with a beautiful expression of gratitude illuminating his countenance.

“Oh, Victor and I did together,” responded Ernest, in as matter of fact a tone as if such a feat were not worth mentioning. “You remember, Rebus, when you saved me from the shark I promised you that if I ever got the chance I’d do as much for you; and now we’re quits, you see.”

Erebus knelt down on the deck before the two

boys, and lifting up his hands in a curious gesture suggestive of worship, said solemnly,—

“De good Lord bless you boff for savin’ de life of dis poor niggah.”

“Oh, that’s all right, Rebus,” said Victor, in a somewhat impatient tone, for he hated anything approaching a scene. “Get your head fixed up, and go and lie down for a while. It will do you good.”

Erebus dutifully obeyed, and matters returned to their normal quiet on board the schooner.

The hours slipped away almost imperceptibly while the *Saucy Kate*, moved by a gentle trade-wind, warm as the human breath, glided over the long, slow swells which rose and fell like the pulsing of a mighty bosom.

A delicious languor took possession of everybody. Screened from the heat of the sun by a broad awning that cast the whole stern into shadow, the passengers lounged at their ease in scanty attire, sipping ice-cold drinks, and enjoying the marvellous beauty of the seascape through which they were passing.

Overhead, the sky arched in azure splendour, flecked by hardly a feather of cloud; all around, the sea undulated in great curves of lapis-lazuli blue, from

which the flying-fish sprang in frantic fear of their remorseless pursuers, and, after gleaming for a moment in the bright sunshine like silver arrows, fell back with soft splashes into their proper element.

It seemed a veritable voyage in Paradise. So lovely was all nature that one could hardly conceive of her forces working woe to man. Yet now and then they encountered tokens of her unsparing destructiveness when she rose in her wrath.

Once they passed at a respectful distance a long band of green light reaching out into the indigo depths from the western end of a small island.

It was a sunken reef, and a very dangerous one; and high upon it, in sharp relief against the blue light, lay a wrecked vessel on her beam ends—the pitiful remains of what once had been a noble bark.

Her decks had been broken in, the roofs of her cabin were gone, her masts were splintered off short, her empty hold yawned naked to the sun, and she had taken on a yellowish-white colour like that of a sun-bleached bone.

Abandoned by her crew, plundered and dismantled by wreckers, beat upon pitilessly by scorching sun and unresting sea, so bereft, so forlorn, so utterly undone did she seem, that it was hard to picture her in

all her pristine glory, with a cloud of spotless canvas bellying to the wind, leaping from billow to billow like some splendid thing of life.

"It must be a dreadful thing to be wrecked," said Victor reflectively, with his eyes fixed upon the ill-fated bark. "One minute to be bowling along merrily, and the next—crash!—hard and fast on the reef; to stay there until doomsday."

"I hope nothing like that will happen to us," said Ernest, with a trace of apprehension in his tone. He had a quick imagination, and the sight of the bark, and his cousin's musings thereon, brought very vividly before his mind the possibility of being cast away.

"I hope not, I'm sure," responded Victor. "But there's no telling. Storms come up very suddenly here, and sometimes they're fearfully violent."

But the *Saucy Kate* was not destined to be troubled with storms, on this part of her trip at any rate; and keeping on in the same lazy, luxurious fashion, she came in due time to the harbour of Cardenas in Cuba, which was her first place of call.

This flourishing seaport was the centre of a thriving trade in sugar, and had a very prosperous appearance. The boys found much to interest them as they strolled about.

The streets swarmed with a motley multitude: Spanish dons as proud as Lucifer in their rich attire, which seemed hardly appropriate to the oppressive heat; negroes and mulattoes of all shades and sizes, as fat and jolly as though they had not a care in the world; Europeans and Americans on business bent, their one thought being to make their fortune, and get away as quickly as possible; and mingling with them all, yet ever keeping aloof and silent, the sallow stunted "coolies," enduring their hard fate simply because there was no way of escape from it, save through the door of death.

Nor did they shrink from this lamentable alternative when their miseries became altogether intolerable. One evening while the boys were having an after-dinner lounge upon the balcony of the hotel, they saw a file of soldiers march up in a significant way to a house directly opposite.

"Hello!" exclaimed Victor. "What's the matter, I wonder? Is somebody going to be arrested?"

"You'll see in a minute," was the courteous response of a planter, enjoying his cigar in an adjoining easy-chair. "If I'm not mistaken, they're after a batch of coolies."

A succession of authoritative knocks upon the front

door having evoked no response, the soldiers, waxing wrathful, burst it open, and entered without further parley.

In a few minutes they reappeared with half a dozen coolies, who were apparently so dead drunk that they could not stand upon their feet.

"Oh, I see!" said Victor, thinking he understood the whole thing now. "That's a rum-shop, and they've been having a big spree in there instead of doing their work. But why send soldiers after them? Are there no policemen?"

The planter smiled significantly.

"They're all drunk enough," he said, "but it's not with rum. They've been trying to kill themselves with opium, and I'm inclined to think that some of them have made a success of it too."

"Kill themselves!" cried Ernest in horror. "What on earth would they do that for?"

"Because they'd rather die than work," replied the planter sarcastically. "See, the soldiers are going to touch them up with the canes a little. That's the best medicine for such cases."

A vigorous course of shaking and pounding having failed to revive the stupefied creatures, severe whipping with bamboo canes was resorted to,

the soldiers laying on unmercifully, and at the same time forcing their victims to keep upon their feet.

The cruel sight thrilled the boys with horror, but they could do nothing save utter indignant protests; and so deeply were their sympathies for the poor coolies stirred, that when, in spite of all attempts at resuscitation, two of the number died on the street, Victor could not help exclaiming,—

“Well, I’m glad they’re dead. They’re better off than in the hands of such brutes, anyway.”

The passionate interest evinced by the boys aroused the planter from his constitutional languor, so that he volunteered some further information concerning the unhappy coolies.

Brought from China in great numbers under conditions of actual though not nominal slavery, their lives, like those of the Israelites in Egypt, were made bitter with hard bondage, if not in mortar and in brick, in all manner of service in the field; until, preferring death to such utter misery, they committed suicide in appalling numbers.

The six unfortunates whose sufferings the boys were just witnessing had no doubt met by appointment to smoke themselves to death with opium, and had been

prevented from effecting their fell purpose only by the timely appearance of the soldiers.

"And do they really often make away with themselves like that?" inquired Victor, upon whom the pitiful horror of the thing had made a profound impression.

"Oh yes," answered the planter lightly. "When they can get the opium, they seem to prefer that way. But you never know what they'll be up to. A friend of mine, who was engineer in charge of the construction of the Panama railroad, told me that the coolies there, not being able to get opium, and having no knives, would wade out in the bay at low water with a pole, which they would stick firmly into the mud, and then tying themselves tight to it, would wait for the rising tide to drown them."

"How horrible!" gasped Ernest, his pallid features showing how deeply he was moved. "Why are their masters so cruel to them? They must be perfect brutes!"

The planter's sallow cheeks took on a sudden tinge of red. Ernest's indignant language nettled him, for he was himself an employer of coolies.

"Pardon me," he said, in a tone of courteous asperity; "but are you not from the Southern States?"

Both boys bowed assent.

“And your fathers are probably slave-holders,” he went on.

They bowed again.

“And am I to infer, from the warmth of your feelings at the treatment of the coolies here, that the negroes know nothing but kindness at the hands of their masters in the South?” he continued.

For a moment the boys were smitten dumb, their crimson countenances and confused looks showing that the planter’s sarcasm had gone home.

Then Victor spoke up manfully :—

“You’ve got the best of us there, sir. Many of the slaves do have a mighty hard time of it; but not on my father’s plantation nor on my uncle’s. There’s never been a man whipped on either place. Our slaves have to do their work of course, but they’re well treated, and seem to be quite fond of us. See, there comes one of them now,” he added, as Erebus hove into sight, looking a perfect picture in a suit of spotless white duck. “That fellow was born on my father’s plantation, and not long ago father freed him because he saved Ernest’s life, and did some other things. But though he’s a free nigger now he won’t leave us, and yet we can’t get him to take any wages for staying with us.”

The planter eyed Erebus carefully, while Victor, astonished at himself for having made so lengthy a speech, leaned back in his chair flushed and nervous.

"That's certainly the finest nigger I ever saw," said the planter. "Is he as brainy as he is big?"

"Yes, indeed!" cried Ernest. "He's got lots of brains, and you can trust him anywhere or with anything."

"Well, all I can say is," remarked the planter, rising and throwing away the butt of his cigar to indicate that the conversation was at an end, "if that chap's a specimen of your father's way of handling the niggers, you can afford to criticize some of us here; but from all I've been able to learn about the South, he's one of the exceptions that prove the rule."

And having delivered this parting shot, he bade the boys "good-evening," and went into the hotel.

After a stay of a couple of days at Cardenas, the *Saucy Kate* proceeded to Havana, where the boys found the same phases of life they had met at Cardenas reproduced on a larger scale. Spaniards, Englishmen, Americans from both the Northern and Southern states, negroes, and coolies swarmed in the streets, and Victor

and Ernest noted with joy the presence of several unmistakable blockade-runners in the harbour.

Of course they did not fail to visit the cathedral held sacred as the tomb of Columbus, his ashes having been transferred thither with great pomp after resting many years in the city of San Domingo, to which place they had been carried from Spain.

Another point of interest was the Tacon theatre—not because of the building, nor of the performance given therein, but of the remarkable personage to whom it belonged. They were told the whole story by the first mate of the schooner one afternoon while “doing the lions” in his company.

It seemed that many years ago the shores of Cuba were infested with bands of pirates, who plied their fearful trade with comparative impunity—the numerous lagoons on the coast, accessible only through tortuous and shallow channels, and shrouded by dense mangrove bushes, affording safe retreat, while they could easily dash out and intercept vessels passing through the strait separating Cuba from Florida.

These pirates were utterly merciless. They gave no quarter to man, woman, or child that fell into their hands. “Dead men tell no tales,” was the axiom upon which they consistently acted. The cap-

tured vessels were promptly scuttled, and their cargoes, if valuable enough, taken to Havana, where by means of accomplices they were readily realized upon.

Chief of all these bloodthirsty scoundrels was one Marti, whose name became a household word of horror, until at last his iniquities were no longer to be borne, and the United States Government joined forces with the Governor-General of Cuba in an expedition of extermination.

A large and well-equipped fleet was on the eve of sailing. The night was dark and rainy. A figure closely muffled in a cloak approached the palace of the governor-general, and watching his opportunity when the sentry's back was turned, slipped silently through the door, making his way to the apartments of the governor without being discovered.

General Tacon was busy writing, and when, lifting his eyes, he saw the cloaked stranger standing before him, he was about to ring for his secretary.

"Stop, your excellency," interposed the mysterious visitor. "I am here on a dangerous enterprise: I have come to deliver into your hands every pirate on the Cuban coast, upon one condition—a full pardon for myself."

"You shall have it," replied General Tacon, delighted

at the prospect of so easily accomplishing his object. "But who are you?"

"I am Marti," was the startling reply, "and I rely upon the promise you have given me."

The governor was for a moment staggered. Before him stood the very man upon whom he hoped to visit the severest penalties of the law, and he had promised him that he should go scot-free.

But he was a man of his word. Marti was given assurance of immunity, and through his well-laid plans and his skilful guidance, not a single pirate escaped capture and the subsequent "garrote."

By way of reward the abominable traitor was granted a monopoly of the sale of fish in Havana, with the profits of which he built one of the finest fish-markets in the world, and afterwards the splendid Tacon theatre, which he named in honour of the governor with whom he had effected so satisfactory if nefarious an arrangement.

The first mate had hardly finished his narrative, to which the boys had been eager listeners, when he started a little, and pointing to a most venerable yet stalwart-looking Spaniard, whose snow-white hair, velvet cloak, and richly-laced sombrero had so imposing an effect that he might very well have passed

for a governor-general enjoying a dignified old age, exclaimed,—

“By Jove, if that isn’t Marti himself! The vile old reprobate! You wouldn’t think butter would melt in his mouth to see him now. If it weren’t for his grey hairs, I’d like to get my hands on him.”

## CHAPTER XIII.

### AT THE MERCY OF THE STORM.

THE boys stared at the old man with feelings in which astonishment and awe were strangely mingled with a sense of disappointment.

He was the first real pirate they had ever seen, and he fell far short of answering to the picture of such a character they had been carrying in their minds.

No death-dealing pistols protruded their silver-mounted butts from his belt, no keen-edged cutlass hung at his side, no scarlet handkerchief was bound about his head. On the contrary, clad with the sombre richness and dignity of a wealthy don or high official, he moved slowly through the street, in manifest peace with the world and himself.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Ernest, first breaking the silence. "And so that's Marti!" Then as a wave of indignation at the thought of the old rascal's infamy

swept hotly over him, "Just to think what a villain he's been! He ought to have been hung with the rest, oughtn't he, Vic?"

"Hanging would have been too good for such a miserable traitor," responded Victor, in whom the betrayal by the pirate of his accomplices excited even more resentment than his own preceding crimes. "And to think of him being allowed to go about like that, just as if he were a respectable person! This must be a queer place."

It had been their plan to attend the theatre that evening, a good opera company then being on the boards, but the knowledge of the ownership of the place caused them to change their minds. They heartily agreed that they would put no money into the old pirate's pockets, and so they went elsewhere for their amusement.

The *Saucy Kate* having completed her business at Cuba, set out on the return trip to Nassau; and the boys, who now began to feel that they had been long enough away from the *Greyhound*, rejoiced at the brisk breeze with which they were favoured at the start.

The schooner sailed well, and it was very pleasant to lie at ease under the awnings through the heat of

the day, and listen to the steady splashing of the blue waves against the hull, and have the cool wind fanning their cheeks.

They hardly went below even at night. The cabin was as hot as an oven, and they preferred to snatch what sleep they could on deck to being half smothered in their state-room.

When darkness had settled down upon the sea, the effects wrought by the phosphorus in the water were marvellously beautiful. There was no moon. All about the schooner was as black as ebony, yet with a peculiar velvet-like softness unlike the hard darkness of the North. Upon the sable bosom of the sea the *Saucy Kate* marked a course of molten gold—the ripples, rimmed with fire, fleeing away from her prow to right and left until they vanished in the gloomy void, and her wake shining and shimmering behind her until it seemed to reach to the very horizon.

More than one-half the homeward way had been prosperously accomplished, and the boys were beginning to count the hours that still must pass before they would rejoin Mr. Sinclair, when the weather, that up to this had left little to be desired, showed signs of a change for the worse.

The barometer went down rapidly, and as the

mercury sank the captain's face lengthened. He had a valuable cargo and a cabin full of passengers, and the approach of a storm filled him with apprehension.

The *Saucy Kate* was by this time to the south of the Andros Islands, and having given a wide berth to the outlying reefs, had pointed her bow almost straight for New Providence, when the storm broke upon her with true tropical suddenness.

Fortunately the barometer had given sufficient warning in advance for due preparation to be made. The awnings had been stripped off and folded away, the fore and main sails lowered, and only a storm-jib left up, the boats had been doubly secured, and everything about the decks lashed to the masts or the bulwarks. Finally the hatches were battened down and the covers drawn over the companion-way.

Preferring exposure to the fury of the elements to being cooped up in the hot, close cabin, the boys remained on deck. By holding on to ropes fastened to the belaying-pins at the foot of the mainmast, they could keep their place even though the schooner were thrown on her beam ends.

After some premonitory gusts and wild, weird wailings, the gale came hissing down from the north upon the *Saucy Kate*. So tremendous was the

pressure of the wind, that although the masts were bare of canvas save for the single storm-jib, the schooner heeled over until she was within an ace of being on her beam ends, and but for Rebus' restraining hand, Victor would infallibly have gone over the side when for a moment he lost his grip upon the rope.

All the other passengers, save the two boys and the negro, had gone below, being willing to endure the confinement of the cabin rather than the driving of the wind and the sharp sting of the flying spray.

Looking white and haggard in the strange half-light which had replaced the brilliant sunshine, the captain stood at the wheel, one of the mates on either side of him, to second, if necessary, his efforts to keep the staggering schooner from being the mere sport of the seething billows; while along the deck, clinging to the ropes or crouching in the lee of the bulwarks, the crew awaited orders.

But there was little or nothing to be done. To face the gale was out of the question. They must needs drive before it until it had in some measure spent its fury, trusting to the stanchness of their craft to withstand all the buffeting of the billows and bring them off scathless.

The danger of foundering was not the only peril that threatened. Tossed about wildly as the schooner was, anything like systematic steering could not be accomplished. Yet the captain well knew that lying right in the course they were being compelled to take were reefs and islands upon which they ran great risk of being driven.

Indeed, if it would not have been blown from the mast as soon as set, he would have hoisted a morsel of canvas on the foremast just to give him more command over the vessel. But even the stout storm-jib threatened to tear itself from the bolt-ropes, and it would have been a mere waste of canvas to try anything more.

Close together by the mainmast were Victor, Ernest, and Erebus. Never before in their lives had the boys been so thoroughly terrified. The appalling gloom of the sky, that seemed to hang but a little space above the mast-top; the fiendish shrieking of the gale in the tense taut rigging, which had been converted for the time into a gigantic *Æolian* harp tuned to harrowing wails of agony and despair; the thrilling shocks of the billows beating madly against the schooner's side; and the fierce hissing of the spray, sweeping in great snowy sheets across the decks—they

would indeed have been something more than stout-hearted if they had not quailed before such tremendous elemental strife, and prayed earnestly for deliverance therefrom.

Erebus bore himself with remarkable composure. Partly because he felt that he was in some sense the boys' protector, and must therefore maintain as calm a front as possible for their sakes, and partly because the storm did not awe him in the same way that it did them, he manifested an imperturbability that was very much to his credit, and was not without its sustaining effect upon the depressed spirits of the boys.

They could not comfort one another by conversation. To make oneself heard it was necessary to shout at the top of the voice. So they were fain to be content with the sense of nearness, and with being able to exchange glances since words were impracticable.

On drove the schooner, making rapid southing in spite of all the efforts of her captain to work off to the north-east, where shelter might be obtained under the lee of one of the Exuma Islands.

The fear that filled his heart as he clung desperately to the wheel was not so much that his vessel would

founder—he had more faith in her than that—but he well knew how, not far to the south-east, and right in the course of the schooner's helpless drift, stretched the Jumentos Cays, a long curving line of coral reefs, some hidden treacherously beneath the waves, some lying just awash, and others rising into little islands which bore a few trees and tufts of verdure upon their crowns.

He could hardly hope to avoid the Jumentos, and once the *Saucy Kate* entered their perilous neighbourhood, it could be only by some miracle that she would find her way out again unscathed.

He was a brave man and a skilful mariner, and all that was to be done under the circumstances he could be relied upon to do. But the hurricane had taken matters entirely out of his hands, and he was practically helpless.

It was mid-day when the storm burst upon the schooner, and the long hours of the afternoon dragged away without any cheering token of abatement of its fury.

The boys were growing dreadfully weary of the struggle to keep their places. Drenched as they were with brine, the wind chilled them to the marrow, and their hands were becoming chafed and sore from grip-

ping the ropes. They would have been glad enough now to seek the shelter of the cabin ; but so violent was the pitching of the vessel, and so constantly were the decks swept by the surge, that they did not dare to move—the risk of being carried overboard was too great to be run.

As the afternoon waned the gloom deepened about the struggling vessel, upon which the incessant straining was beginning to tell, a trial of the pumps having shown a foot of water in the hold.

And now the danger the captain dreaded revealed itself with unmistakable distinctness. Not far ahead, and indicating themselves by the snowy foam springing high into the air, were the Jumentos Cays.

To what part of them the ill-starred schooner had come was not to be told, but as far as the eye could reach to right and left the boiling surf extended with hardly a break.

“ God help us ! ” murmured the captain, the thought of his wife and children at home in dear old England filling his eyes with manly tears ; “ we can never get out of this.”

Numbed almost to stupefaction by the pitiless beating upon them of wind and sea, the boys did not at first realize that the vessel was so near the breakers.

It was Erebus who made it known to them by shouting out in accents of wild alarm,—

“Golly alive, young massa, just look dere! We’s goin’ right on to de rocks!”

Raising themselves to their feet with difficulty, the boys looked ahead. The sight was certainly sufficient to appall the stoutest heart.

North and south to the very limit of the horizon stretched a snow-white smother of roaring surge, into the midst of which they must in a few moments be plunged. Escape from it in either direction was impossible. Only by the miracle of direct return upon her course could the schooner save herself.

But this was not to be thought of. Into the wild confusion she must drive, as helpless as a chip upon the wave.

Ernest threw his arms about Victor, and made no attempt to disguise the sob in his voice as he murmured,—

“We’ll be all drowned, Vic. We’ll never see the *Greyhound* nor Charleston again, and they’ll all be so sorry at home. Oh, it’s dreadful to have to die so far away from mother and father and the others!”

Victor, bracing himself up, and controlling by a mighty effort the workings of his countenance and

the quivering of his voice, which would betray how much he felt the horrors of their situation, responded with a degree of composure that surprised himself, and was not without its effect upon his cousin,—

“Don’t let us give up, Ernie. There’s lots of chances for us. Even if the schooner strikes a reef we may get ashore somewhere, and be all right until some vessel comes along and takes us off again.”

“Do you remember that bark we saw on our way over?” Ernest asked, with a shudder at the recollection. “If we struck on a place like that, wouldn’t it be awful?”

Victor in spite of himself shuddered in sympathy. Had that vessel met her fate during such a hurricane as was now making sport of the schooner, not one of those on board her could have possibly escaped with their lives.

“Don’t think of her,” replied Victor. “We may have better luck. Let us loose these ropes so as to be ready to jump if the schooner strikes.”

When their hands became chafed by holding on to the ropes, they had wound the latter about their waists, and now they took them in their hands again. It would not do to run any risk of entanglement when the crisis came.

But this critical moment seemed strangely delayed. Charging straight at the spray-crowned line of billows, the *Saucy Kate*, instead of striking with a grinding crash, as her captain so fully expected that for an instant he closed his eyes in sheer horror though he did not loosen his grasp upon the wheel, after some harrowing moments of tossing and pitching in a way that threatened to tear the masts from their sockets, passed on into somewhat smoother water.

By marvellous good fortune she had found an opening in the reef sufficiently wide to let her through untouched; and though the spray sprang half-way up her masts, and the breakers hurled themselves furiously upon her, she was still sound, and fit for further struggle.

The captain drew a deep breath of relief, and turning to the first mate, cried out, half in wonderment, half in hope,—

“She never touched, thank God! Maybe we’ll work through yet.”

But, to use a homely saying, in getting through the outer edge of the reef the schooner seemed only to have passed from the frying-pan into the fire. Before, the deadly breakers had been only ahead; now they were all about her. She was in the midst

of a perfect maze of reefs and coral heads, so that, even with an ordinary wind, and with all sails drawing, it would have puzzled the most skilful pilot to steer her safely ; and tossed about as she was by the gale, it seemed she must infallibly strike at any moment.

The boys were on their feet now, sustaining themselves by laying hold of the belaying-pins at the foot of the mainmast. Erebus stood near them. All three felt that death was at hand, and yet were determined to fight for life to the last breath.

They could make out dimly rising athwart the bows, for the night was fast closing in upon them, a dark mass of no great size that seemed as if it might be land ; but between them and it intervened a mad maelstrom that the schooner could surely not cross intact.

“ Well, young massas,” Erebus called out, “ if dat ain’t a big island right dere ! May be we run agin it and get safe on shore.”

But the words had hardly left his lips before, with a sudden violent shock that hurled them all to the deck and sent both masts by the board with a fearful splintering crash, the schooner struck full upon a half-sunken reef.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### CAST AWAY.

THE cabin doors were burst open, and up from below, in wild confusion, rushed the other passengers, uttering cries of terror and groans of despair as the full horror of their situation was revealed to them.

“Here, you lubbers, look out for yourselves!” roared the captain, losing all sense of the respect due his patrons in the intensity of his excitement. “Lay hold of something, or you’ll be all washed overboard.”

His warning was well founded. Rocking and grinding upon the reef, and swept from stem to stern by the billows, that seemed to exult in having at last secured their prey, the schooner offered slight protection to the unfortunate passengers, and they could only keep their places upon her deck by holding on like grim death.

Ernest narrowly escaped being carried off with the

wreckage of the mast. Indeed, but for Erebus' quick eye and brawny arm, he would have been separated from Victor, doubtless never to rejoin him; and it was not without a tremendous effort that his gigantic protector was able to withhold him from the greedy maw of the merciless surf.

Yet, strange to say, the vessel had not reached her final resting-place. Lightened by the loss of her masts, she lifted sufficiently upon a billow of extraordinary size to clear the reef upon which she had smashed her bows; and although the water poured into the jagged holes made by the sharp coral at a rate that meant speedy foundering, the *Saucy Kate* staggered on resolutely towards the tree-clad island, now scarce discernible in the deepening dusk.

"Bless de Lord, we's goin' to make it!" shouted Erebus, with his great eyes fixed upon the dark mass ahead.

"Make what?" cried Victor, a thrill of hope for a moment arousing him from his benumbed and despairing state.

"Make dat island right dere, and get ashore on it," the negro shouted back, at the same time pointing with a quivering finger to the thing that gave him ground for hope of escape.

There was nothing to be done but wait. The heavy rolling of the schooner told how rapidly the water was gaining in the hold. Even provided no reef intervened between her and the island, it was a question whether she could float long enough to reach its strand.

It was an affair of minutes. Deeper and deeper sank the schooner; nearer and nearer drew the shadowy island. All on board were now alive to the situation—to the strange race that was being run between foundering and stranding—between certain death if the vessel went down in deep water, and the possibility of escape if she kept up long enough to be beached.

The horror of death had fallen upon every heart, and in speechless submission they awaited the inevitable, when the dull, heavy shock of the schooner's keel upon soft, yielding sand told that the gallant vessel had won in the race against the fell force of ocean, and reached the goal to which they were all looking.

Shock followed shock in quick succession, the schooner being bumped up the beach, which happily was of white coral sand and entirely free from boulders, by the blows of the billows.

“Look to yourselves now, all!” roared the captain, in a voice of such stentorian strength as to be heard even above the roaring of wind and surf.

“Now then, young massas,” shouted Erebus, “come wif me; we’ll all try it together.”

Obedying him as implicitly as if they were under his command, Victor and Ernest sprang into the breakers at his side, and struck out for the land.

Well was it for them that long familiarity with the surf on their own shores prepared them in some measure for the fight they had now to make against the fierce fury of the waters that boiled and foamed about them.

Flung hither and thither—at one moment half smothered in the breaking of a wave, and the next rising high upon the back of a huge billow—they yet contrived to make progress landward.

As might be expected, it was Erebus who first established a footing ashore, and the moment he had done so he turned to look for the boys.

They were not far behind him, but so exhausted had they become from the tremendous struggle, that it was plain the undertow would be too strong for them unless timely help were given.



*"He grasped Victor, and rushing back dropped him upon the beach."*



This was Erebus' opportunity, and with glad heart he hastened to the rescue.

Plunging into the mad commotion, heedless of all danger to himself, he grasped Victor, who was nearest him, and rushing back dropped him upon the beach without a word, instantly returning for Ernest.

But during the few moments occupied in saving Victor, Ernest had been swept back again by the recoil of the billow, and Erebus could not make him out in the darkness.

The poor boy was now insensible, and within an ace of actual death. One minute more and it would have been all over with him, when happily the captain, making his own way to land, chanced upon his helpless form.

He was not the man to let another human being die without an effort to save him. Gripping Ernest with his powerful left hand, he carried him onward, until, just as his own strength was failing, Erebus reached him, and the two bore the senseless boy in safety to the shore, where Victor waited in consuming anxiety.

"Oh! he's not dead, is he?" cried the latter, in a voice full of poignant emotion; "Ernie's not dead?"

“Not by a long chalk,” responded the captain, rather bluntly. “Hold him up by the heels a minute to let the water run out of him, and he’ll be all right again.”

And having indicated this practical, albeit somewhat primitive method of returning the half-drowned boy to consciousness, he hastened back to the water’s edge, that he might render assistance to others fighting for their lives in the opposing surf.

Without stopping to think of any other way, Victor and Erebus dutifully obeyed the captain, holding poor Ernest on his head until a lot of brine did pour from his mouth ; and then laying him on his back, they proceeded to chafe his hands and rub his chest with fervent vigour.

They were not kept long in uncertainty as to the happy effects of their efforts. Giving a groan of pain and bewilderment, Ernest presently opened his eyes, and murmured,—

“You saved my life again. God bless you !”

“Oh no, Massa Ernest ; it was de captain dat did it dis time !” cried Erebus, too honest to take to himself credit that was not his.

“But you helped anyway, and you did save mine all by yourself,” said Victor, a warm flush of grate-

ful feeling suffusing his pale cheeks. Then lifting Ernest's head, he asked tenderly,—

“Are you all right now, Ernie?”

“Right enough,” answered Ernest, in a tone hardly above a whisper, for he was very weak. “But I'm awfully tired, and I feel full of water.”

“Oh, you'll soon get over that,” said Victor cheerfully. “When you can get on your feet again, we'll go up among the trees out of the wind.”

As soon as Erebus was satisfied that neither Victor nor Ernest required any further care at his hands, he followed the captain to the water's edge, and, thanks to his enormous strength and perfect command of it, rendered signal service in helping ashore the struggling castaways.

Indeed, but for these two gallant men, the brawny Englishman and the gigantic negro, the death-roll would have had many more names than it did. As it was, in spite of their heroic efforts, when the vessel's company—a wretched-looking band of soaked and shivering mortals—gathered together on the beach, a count of heads revealed the sad truth that two of the crew and three of the passengers were missing.

With their joy at their own deliverance dashed by

sorrow at the fate of their comrades, the survivors made their way up the beach towards the tree-grove that crowned the island upon which they had been cast away.

They sought shelter from the fury of the wind to which they had been so long exposed, and soon found it amidst the dense foliage of the tropical forest.

They were, of course, unable to light a fire, to have done which would have been such a comfort. So there was no alternative but to watch through the long, weary hours of darkness, tormented by hunger, cold, and other miseries.

Both the boys fell asleep in sheer exhaustion, but Erebus never closed his eyes. Letting them pillow their heads upon his broad thighs as he sat braced against a tree-trunk, he hardly stirred, uncomfortable though his position soon became, until day-break.

During the night the hurricane blew itself out, and the sun rose in cloudless splendour upon a scene of exquisite beauty and peace. Were it not for the hulk of the ill-starred schooner heeled over upon the beach, with the blue waves gently caressing her sides, as though sorry for the ill they had wrought, and, sadder token still, the corpses of two of those who

had fallen victims to the sea's murderous wrath lying half buried in the sand, it might have been hard to realize how wildly the elements had been raging but a short while previously.

The bodies of the drowned having been given decent burial, and careful though fruitless search made for the other missing ones, the captain announced that he was going out to the wreck, and that all who wished to might accompany him.

The boys and Erebus were among those who accepted the invitation. There was little difficulty in reaching the schooner. The billows had driven her well in on the beach, and the tide was now at ebb.

To the great joy of all it was found that in spite of the hard treatment to which she had been subjected, the *Saucy Kate* was still tolerably intact, and that her cabin stores and the greater part of the cargo were in good condition.

At once, under the captain's directions, there ensued a scene of activity that delighted the boys' hearts.

"We're going to be regular Robinson Crusoes, aren't we?" exclaimed Ernest, with radiant face, as they prepared to do their share of the work.

So intensely interested did they both become in the preparing of quarters on the island, that for the time

at least they entirely forgot their anxiety to get back to Nassau, and even ceased to concern themselves about how their return was to be accomplished.

The big sails were stripped from the masts, for they would never hold wind again, and sent ashore to make two tents—one for the officers and passengers, and the other for the crew. All the provisions, and everything in the way of clothing, nautical instruments, bedding, etc., were taken to land; for, as the captain shrewdly remarked,—

“There’s no knowing how long we may have to stay here, or how soon another hurricane may have a try at the schooner.”

Whatever the water had got into was spread out on the sand, where the blazing sun soon dried it thoroughly; and ere night fell the two tents were put up on a smooth bit of turf in the shadow of a clump of trees, and fitted out with comfortable couches for everybody.

The captain proved himself an admirable director-in-chief. He seemed to have an eye for everything, and to find forgetfulness of his troubles in the activity of the moment.

Much to their relief, the boys found their own things but little injured; and having appropriated a

corner of the tent for themselves, which they fitted up to the best of their ability, began to feel quite at home.

The cook of the schooner having been one of those who lost their lives, Erebus was good enough to offer his services, which the captain promptly accepted; and his first dinner was such a success that the grateful passengers pledged themselves to reward him handsomely as soon as they reached Nassau.

But how were they to get to Nassau? That was the all-important question, the eager discussion of which occupied the evening.

They had been shipwrecked upon one of the larger of the Jumentos Cays—an island of but a few acres in extent, and entirely uninhabitable, although it bore indication of having been lived upon from time to time by parties of fishermen, or may be of wreckers.

“If we stay here,” said the captain, in his brusque decisive way, after there had been many suggestions offered and opinions advanced, “no one knows when some vessel will come along and take us off. We’re clean off the track, and there mayn’t be a sail in sight for a month or more.”

“Then what do you advise, captain?” was the cry.

“Well,” he responded deliberately, for he expected

his proposition to meet with protests, "my advice is that we patch up the boats, and as soon as they're fit to float make a try for Nassau. It's a bit risky, if you like, but it's a big sight better than hanging on here waiting for the chance of being taken off."

There was a moment's silence after he had finished speaking, which Ernest broke by saying eagerly,—

"Oh yes! do let us try the boats. There won't be another storm for a good while, and if it's as fine as it was on our way over, we'll have no trouble in getting back to Nassau."

There was a general smile at the boy's earnestness, yet all were glad he had spoken. His sanguine impulsiveness helped them to make their minds up to the same conclusion: and after some further discussion of ways and means, it was unanimously decided to carry the captain's plan.

The *Saucy Kate* carried two boats, both of which had been considerably damaged during the hurricane, but were quite capable of being repaired so as to be seaworthy again. There was no lack of materials or tools for the job, and one of the mates being also a first-class ship's carpenter, the work was at once proceeded with.

But it would take a couple of days at least to com-

plete, and in the meantime the boys were thrown upon their own resources for amusement. They soon had explored every inch of the island in spite of Erebus' warnings about the snakes, whose unfailing presence is the bane of the West Indian paradise.

"De snakes be most eberywheres," urged the negro. "Ye can't hardly put yer foot down widout stepping on one."

What he said was true enough ; but the danger was really more his own than theirs, for he went barefoot most of the time, while they wore shoes which afforded adequate protection.

Yet Ernest had a narrow escape one day when in hot pursuit of a beautiful bird whose brilliant plumage had attracted him.

It was on the farther side of the island from the tent, and Erebus had followed him, leaving Victor, who was feeling too indolent to bother himself about a bird of Paradise had one happened to be in sight, lying in the shade of the trees.

Ernest pressed on through the grove, determined to get a good look at the bird even if he could not capture it ; and not keeping a sharp enough look-out for obstructions, tripped over a liana, that sent him headlong into the rank grass.

He threw out his hands to save his head, and to his horror one of them lighted upon the cold, slimy body of a snake, whose repose he had thus rudely disturbed.

His cry of terror and the snake's hiss of anger were simultaneous, and the next instant, before Ernest, unable to rise at once, could squirm out of its reach, the loathsome reptile had shot out from its lissome coil, and struck its deadly fangs into his right hand just at the back of the wrist.

"O Rebus! I've been bitten by a snake!" he screamed, clapping his other hand upon the bite as he struggled to his feet.

"Where, Massa Ernest?" panted the negro, rushing up to him and taking hold of his arm.

Without speaking, Ernest showed the tiny pink puncture; and instantly grasping his wrist, Erebus pressed it to his mouth, covering the wound with his thick lips, and sucking at it furiously.

White and trembling, Ernest submitted unquestioningly; and so strange is the working of the mind, that even in the height of the horror which chilled his blood, there came to him the recollection of the scene in English history where Queen Eleanor saved King Edward's life by rendering him a similar service when a poisoned dagger had been thrust into his arm.

When Erebus had done all he could with his lips, he spat out the saliva, making fearful grimaces as he did so, and then asked Ernest for his handkerchief.

“Must tie up you wrist eber so tight,” he said as he bound the linen round about the wound, exerting such pressure that poor Ernest was fain to cry out in pain.

“Never mind, Massa Ernest; the tighter de better, I can tell you,” said his sable surgeon soothingly.

Feeling sick and weak—whether from fright, or from the deadly venom finding its way through his system, he did not know—Ernest, with the negro’s assistance, made his way back to the tents, where Victor sprang to meet him then with a cry of alarm, for his quick eye at once perceived that some mishap had occurred.

## CHAPTER XV.

### IN OPEN BOATS.

ERNEST'S accident aroused a great deal of interest and sympathy among his fellow-castaways, and during the next few hours he was watched with keen anxiety to see whether symptoms of poisoning would show themselves.

But, thanks to the prompt and vigorous measures taken by Erebus, beyond a certain feeling of dizziness and some slight qualms of sickness, the bitten boy suffered no ill effects.

His experience, however, intensified the eagerness of the others to get away from the island, and the repairing of the boats was urged on at the utmost possible speed.

At length the work was done, and the captain declared the boats ready. They were two good roomy boats, each capable of carrying ten persons comfortably, besides the necessary supplies of food

and water, and they were fully provided with oars and sails.

The start was made on as propitious a morning as heart could wish. The sun shone approvingly from a cloudless sky, a brisk breeze blew from the right quarter, and with sails drawing so well that no oars were needed, the boats bade "good-bye" to the Jumentos Cays, and set forth on their venturesome voyage to Nassau.

There being but sixteen in the party, each boat had to carry only eight, which enabled an additional water-cask to be taken. A full week's supply of pilot bread, dried beef, and preserved fruit offered guarantee against hunger, and in excellent spirits all round the castaways watched the wreck of the schooner dwindle and vanish out of sight as they bore away to the north at a good rate of speed.

Victor and Ernest, with Erebus of course, were in the captain's boat. The idea of the enterprise suited them entirely. They did not reckon upon the long exposure to the heat of the sun during the day, and the impossibility of obtaining proper rest at night which their position entailed.

"It will be fine fun if we don't have another storm," said Ernest enthusiastically, as they bowled merrily

along over the blue water. "I wonder how many days it will take us to get to Nassau at this rate?"

"How long will it take us, captain?" inquired Victor, turning to the captain, who sat in the stern-sheets enjoying his pipe while he managed the tiller.

The captain looked very thoughtful, and knocked the ashes out of his pipe preparatory to refilling it before replying.

"Well," he said, glancing around upon the azure waves over which the boat was dancing so blithely, and then up to the sky whose vast dome was not flecked by a single wisp of cloud, "if this trade breeze holds, and no dirty weather bothers us, we ought to make Nassau in three days at the worst."

"Three days!" cried Ernest; "that will be splendid, won't it, Vic? And then we'll be back on the dear old *Greyhound* again. I hope all the work on her will be done by that time."

"I hope so, indeed," responded Victor. "I don't want to be hanging around Nassau any longer than can be helped, and I'm anxious to have another race with the Yankees. They can't catch the *Greyhound* so long as we've got decent coal for her engines."

The first day passed almost without incident. The breeze blew steadily, and the boats made fine progress.

The fierce blaze of the sun was of course very trying, but it was tempered by the wind, and the sense of motion made it easier to endure.

The captain being in very good humour, in spite of the heavy losses he had sustained by the wrecking of his schooner, helped to while away the time for the boys by relating some of his past experiences.

He had been around the globe more than once, and had seen many strange things, and passed through many startling adventures; and if, after the manner of old salts spinning yarns, he did sometimes embroider the facts of his narrative with the workings of his fancy, why, it only made the story more interesting to the boys, of whom one at least listened without a ripple of doubt disturbing his mind.

Night followed close upon the sunset with the suddenness of the tropics, and the occupants of the boats welcomed it gladly for the relief it brought from the unsparing heat of the day.

The night was clear though moonless, and the stars shone with the brilliancy peculiar to the south, the Southern Cross proudly dominating its sister constellations. It was a novel and strange experience for the boys to be out on the open sea in a boat such as they had never before seen used except in harbour. At

night even more than during the day their infinite insignificance as compared with the vastness round about and above them filled their souls with awe.

"What miserable little mites we all are!" said Victor reflectively, looking up to the flashing myriads of stars, and then down at the little group of men on their mere cockle-shell of a craft. "I wonder, are there other people in those stars, or do they shine simply for our benefit? It seems absurd that only this tiny bit of a world should be inhabited, and all those thousands of others have no living thing upon them."

"If there are people up there," responded Ernest, who was not less affected by the weird, silent beauty of the night, "it is to be hoped they're not so fond of fighting and of killing one another as we folks are. Perhaps only angels live on the stars, and they go from star to star visiting one another, just as our people go to one another's houses."

"According to my thinking," interposed the captain, "those stars are as empty of living creatures as the Cay we were wrecked on. The Lord's about got His hands full looking after us miserable sinners; and if there were the likes of us on every one of them stars, He'd have more than He could attend to."

The boys laughed, and looked hard into the captain's face to see if he were in earnest or only joking, but not a muscle of his weather-beaten countenance moved; and neither of them feeling equal to arguing out so profound a problem as his words suggested, they let the matter drop, and changed the conversation.

There was little sleep for them that night. The novelty of their situation, and the difficulty of adjusting their bones to the hard boards of the boat so as to secure a comfortable position, kept them awake save for a short nap or two which they were able to snatch before the sun again rose upon them.

To the keen disappointment of all, the day brought no wind with it. A perfect calm prevailed. The sea lay as smooth and still as a vast mirror, and the sun sent down his scorching rays pitilessly upon every object beneath him. The heat became wellnigh intolerable in the open boats, where no protection from it was possible, and the suffering occupants wished themselves back on the Cay again, that they might seek the shelter of the trees.

Victor seemed to be the most affected. The excitement and exposure of the past few days had told heavily upon his none-too-robust constitution; and although his brave spirit had borne him up thus far

so that neither Ernest nor Erebus had any idea of how wretchedly he felt, he had really been suffering much from pain and weakness.

As the long hours of the day dragged wearily on without a breath of wind stirring, Victor's condition caused deep concern. He seemed completely prostrated by the heat, and lay with his head in the lap of Erebus, who nursed him as tenderly as a mother her sick babe, with eyes closed and his chest heaving with laboured breathing.

"He's got a sunstroke," said the captain anxiously, "and if the breeze don't spring up soon there's no knowing how hard it may go with him. Keep his head as cool as you can. It's all you can do out here."

Filled with affectionate alarm, so that he could scarce restrain his tears, Ernest sat beside Victor and kept constantly renewing the handkerchiefs dipped in the brine upon his fevered forehead.

"He'll be all right again soon, won't he, Rebus?" he would say over and over, as though finding comfort in the words.

And Erebus, looking down into the flushed face in his lap, and striving to put as confident a tone in his voice as he could, would answer,—

“To be sure, Massa Ernest; Massa Victor, he be all right again. Dis yer’s nuffin but a little bit ob sunstroke.”

Presently Victor became delirious, and broke out into strange wild talk. Now he was at home in Charleston, in the midst of the loved ones, calling this one and that by name, and speaking to them eagerly. Again he was on board the *Greyhound*, with a Federal cruiser in hot pursuit; and trembling with excitement, he would call to the engineer to put on more steam, or turn to hurl taunts at the hated pursuers. Silas Fitch was much in his mind, and he uttered his name in a tone of fierce contempt that would have made the wretched traitor squirm had he been present to hear. It showed how deep a grudge he still cherished against the Northern spy, even though he had, as all supposed, paid the last penalty for his treachery. More than once, crying out wildly, “Oh, I’m so hot! I’m burning! I must have a dip,” he would have sprung over the gunwale of the boat into the water, had not Erebus firmly yet gently restrained him, saying soothingly as he held him in his strong arms,—

“You mustn’t do dat, Massa Victor; dat would

be bery bad for you. Rebus take good care ob you. Don't ye worry."

All this was terribly hard upon Ernest, who entirely forgot his own discomfort, great as that was, in his intense concern for Victor.

"Oh, if we were only back on the *Greyhound*!" he groaned. "Uncle has lots of medicine, and he'd soon fix poor Vic up. It's dreadful not being able to do anything for him."

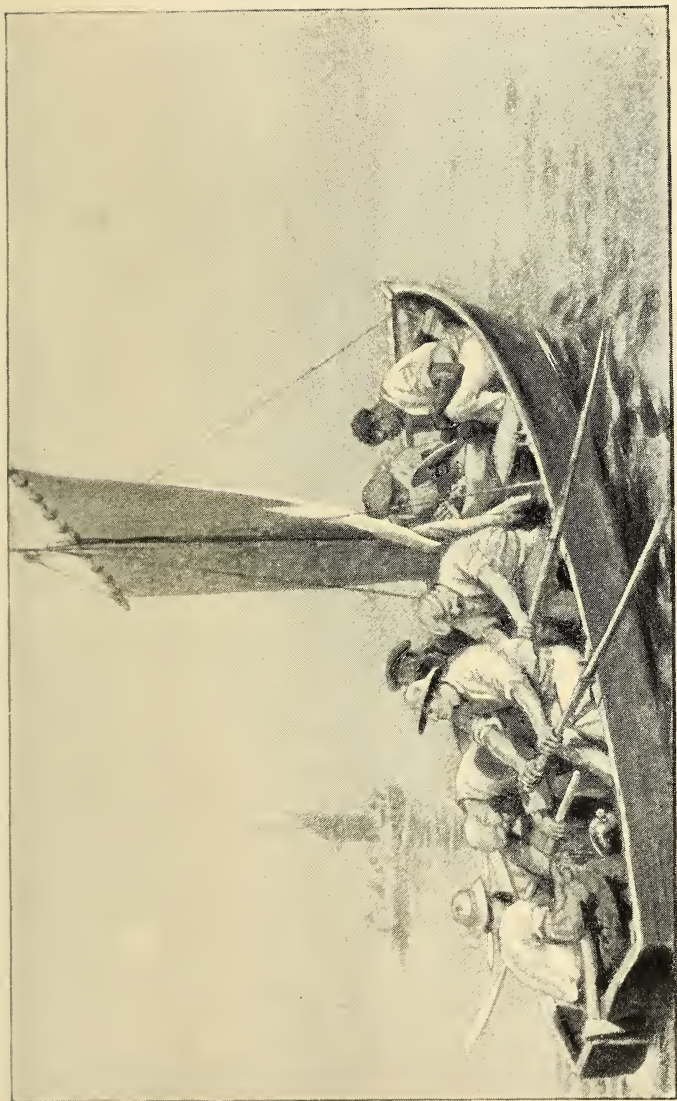
Late in the afternoon a thrill of hope was caused by the captain sighting smoke to the south of them.

"We're right in the track of steamers going to Nassau from the Antilles," he said, "and may be that's one of them."

With devouring anxiety they watched the approach of the steamer, which their intense impatience made to seem unconscionably slow.

To obviate all risk of being passed without notice, the captain ordered his men to row towards her; and stimulated by eagerness to be relieved from the confinement of the boat, they tugged away sturdily at the oars despite the almost overpowering heat.

The appearance of the steamer cheered Ernest greatly. There would surely be on board her the remedies Victor so urgently needed, and perhaps



*"Becalmed in open boats under a blazing sun."*



even a physician who could give him proper treatment.

“You’ll be all right soon, Vic,” he said caressingly, “once you get out of this horrid boat and on board the steamer.”

The steamer came steadily on until the two boats were within hail of her, when the captain’s stentorian voice rang out,—

“Steamer ahoy! We’re in distress. We want you to take us aboard.”

Back came the answer in good round English that sounded sweeter than the best music in the ears of the occupants of the boats,—

“Come alongside then; we’ll take you on board.”

The steamer slowed up, the boats were eagerly rowed close to her big black hull, a rope-ladder was lowered, and in a few minutes the whole company was on board, Erebus carrying Victor up on his mighty shoulders.

By happy chance there was a physician on the steamer, a clever Frenchman of much experience travelling from Martinique to Nassau, and he at once took the suffering boy into his care.

“*Ce jeune homme est très malade,*” he said, looking very grave, after he had examined Victor’s pulse and

felt his fevered forehead. "But," he added with an expressive shrug, as though to imply that that fact did not matter so much seeing that he had the case in hand, "we will take care that he not die—ah no;" with which assurance Ernest's anxious heart was greatly comforted. He put implicit faith in physicians. He credited them with power over life and death, his belief in their healing skill being perhaps all the stronger from the fact that he had never himself been in need of it.

But his confidence in the alert important Frenchman was not misplaced. By the application of ice to his burning brow, and the administration of cooling draughts, he in a little while brought the fever under control, and Victor fell into a sound sleep, with Erebus standing by him vigorously plying a huge palm-leaf fan.

Early next morning the steamer made her way into Nassau harbour, and by this time Victor had recovered sufficiently to get upon his feet again, although he still felt weak, and was troubled with a dull headache.

Without loss of time the boys repaired to the *Greyhound*, where they found Mr. Sinclair worrying greatly over the delay in their appearance. According

to his calculation they were a week overdue, and he had been inquiring anxiously in every quarter for tidings concerning them.

He was much troubled at first by Victor's appearance; but the latter assuring him that he would soon be all right again, and explaining just what was the matter with him, his mind was relieved, and he listened with deep interest to the recital of the boys' experiences.

On his part he had much to tell of difficulties with machinists, and delays of different sorts that had sorely tried his patience. Only by the exercise of the utmost diplomacy, and by the most liberal expenditure of money, had he been able to hasten on the repairs to the *Greyhound*.

But, in spite of all obstacles, they were rapidly approaching completion, and in a few days more the good steamer would be ready for her cargo.

"I'm safe to make a big pot of money on the next trip, if nothing goes amiss," Mr. Sinclair said, the lines of work and worry on his face smoothing out as he smiled at the prospect. "And if my figures come out right, I think I'll take a rest for a time. It's mighty hard work this."

Little notion had he as he spoke thus of the

troubles soon to thicken about him, and of the delays that were to intervene ere the next trip to which he looked forward with such bright expectation would be brought to a successful issue.

Relieved by the return of the boys, and rejoicing in the prospect of soon having the *Greyhound* ready for sea again, he took no thought for the insidious deadly foe lurking in the malarious atmosphere of Nassau.

But Yellow Jack was not minded to allow him to dwell so long within his domain without paying him tribute. The day after the repairs were completed, Mr. Sinclair began to suffer from lassitude and loss of appetite. This caused no alarm at first; but when there followed severe rigors alternating with flushes of heat, a doctor was called in, who, after one look at his patient, pronounced his illness a bad case of yellow fever!

## CHAPTER XVI.

### FEVER-SMITTEN.

THE doctor's announcement filled the *Greyhound's* company with consternation, which might have turned into panic but for the prompt decisive action of Hank Thayer. Even as it was, several of the seamen deserted for fear of the disease, and others were prevented from doing so only by very shame for such precipitancy.

At the first opportunity Thayer took counsel with Mr. Sinclair as to what should be done.

"My advice, sir, is that we get out of this fever-hole just as smartly as we know how," he said. "There's no telling which of us Yellow Jack will lay hold of next; and even if it costs us a trip, it'll pay better in the end to run up to Halifax and get a clean bill of health than to stay around here hoping to shake the fever off."

Mr. Sinclair groaned as he turned his hot head

upon the pillow. It was a bitter disappointment to him this having to change his plans, yet he could not fail to see the wisdom of the pilot's suggestion.

"Is there such small chance of my getting over it if we stay here?" he asked in a pleading tone, as though wanting Thayer to say they might run the risk for the sake of making the trip as intended.

"Mr. Sinclair," responded the pilot, taking his hand and speaking with the utmost gravity, "I wouldn't give a dime for your chance of life if you stay here. We can't get away too soon for your sake, nor for our own either for that matter."

Mr. Sinclair sighed heavily, and after a moment's silence said,—

"Will you tell Victor I want to see him?"

On Victor appearing he looked on him with eyes full of love and pride.

"My darling boy," he said, speaking slowly and with some difficulty, "I am very ill, and perhaps may never get better."

Victor started forward, and the tears filled his eyes, but his father checked him by a wave of his hand.

"Listen to me, Victor," he continued. "You are my eldest son, and until I recover you must take my place as best you can. You must represent me in the

command of this steamer. Of course Thayer will be your right-hand man, and will, I am sure, do what is right and fair by you as he has done by me. Call him in now, and I'll tell him."

When the pilot came in, Mr. Sinclair repeated in substance what he had said to Victor, adding,—

"And now, Thayer, I have only this to ask of you—that you'll be as true to my son as you've been to me, and if the worst comes to the worst, and Yellow Jack has his own way with me, you'll do your best to get the *Greyhound* safe back to Charleston with all on board. Will you give me your hand on that?"

"That I will, sir," responded the pilot heartily, taking Mr. Sinclair's fevered hand into his huge palm and pressing it gently. "I'll stand by your boy just as I would by yourself. Hank Thayer's acted on the square all his life. He's got a clean record, if it is himself says it, and he'll keep it clean, please God, till his turn comes to hand in his papers."

An expression of profound relief came into Mr. Sinclair's face.

"God bless you, Thayer," he murmured. "Your words do me more good than medicine."

Just then the doctor arrived, and the pilot and Victor withdrew while he attended to his patient.

Victor's head was in such a whirl of confused and conflicting thoughts, that he went away to the stern of the steamer to try to work out the situation by himself.

He would have been something else than a boy if the idea of being placed for the time in command of the *Greyhound* did not fill him with a strange sense of elation, yet at the same moment there pressed upon his spirit the keen anxiety for his father and the chill fear lest his illness should prove fatal.

And then how was he to exercise his authority? Would the crew of the steamer have any respect for such a youth; or would they laugh at the idea of taking orders from him, and just do what they themselves saw fit?

On this point the pilot's action gave him comfort and courage. Not a trace of protest had been visible in his countenance or in his words. Evidently he accepted the situation unquestioningly, and with his loyal support all might go well.

Ernest, who had been up in the city procuring some drugs, now appeared, and Victor told him what his father had said.

Ernest's mouth opened wide with astonishment, and then closed to send forth a long shrill whistle before he spoke.

“Jerusalem!” he exclaimed. “So you’re to be captain of the *Greyhound* until your father gets well! Well, Vic,” he continued, his face growing suddenly grave as he laid both hands upon his cousin’s shoulders and looked earnestly into his troubled countenance, “all that I can say is this, that I’ll obey your orders just as if they were your father’s, and do all I can anyway to help you out.”

Victor was very undemonstrative by nature, but Ernest’s cordial words so moved him that with an impulsiveness he rarely showed he threw his arms about and gave him a hearty hug, exclaiming,—

“What a brick you are, Ernie! It does a fellow good to be with you.”

With the utmost haste the preparations for the run to Halifax were urged on. There was no time to take on board a cargo, although one might have been had; but the coal-bunkers were filled to their utmost capacity, and an abundant stock of supplies laid in, including a large quantity of ice.

In their impatience to be off, every minute seemed as long as an hour; but at length there was nothing further to be done, and on a fine clear evening the *Greyhound* steamed out of Nassau harbour as if rejoicing at being once more at liberty.

Although now innocent of all blockade-running intentions, and having no contraband goods of any kind on board, and being therefore according to strict law not amenable to capture, she was going to give the cruisers no less wide a berth than if her destination were Charleston.

Mr. Sinclair's recovery, the doctor had said, depended largely upon the expedition with which they reached a cooler latitude, and to be overhauled by a Federal ship would be sure to mean delay if nothing worse.

It was with queer feelings, which he would have been reluctant to confess, that Victor, clothed in his new authority, took his place on the bridge.

Of course, the control of the steamer was practically in the hands of the pilot, just as it had been when Mr. Sinclair was at his post. Nevertheless, there he stood, representing the vessel's owner, and entitled to offer an opinion, or even to issue a command, should he see fit.

Had he obeyed the dictates of his own heart rather than his father's instructions, he would have been at his side instead of on deck. But Mr. Sinclair was firm on this point.

"I know your love prompts you to be my nurse, Victor," he said, with affectionate emphasis; "but you

have a more important duty to perform. Rebus and Ernest will look after me between them, and the doctor has left the most minute instructions as to everything that is to be done. Your place is with Thayer now. God bless you, my boy, and grant that we may reach Halifax all right."

Mr. Sinclair's illness revealed a new capacity in Erebus hitherto unsuspected. He made an almost perfect nurse, moving with a softness and celerity hardly credible in view of his bulk; and, showing an intelligent grasp of the whole situation, and a quick sympathy with the patient's needs that constantly spared him the necessity of speech, he proved an ideal attendant. Many a time during the long weary hours of his sickness would Mr. Sinclair murmur gratefully,—

"How good you are, Rebus! you're helping me more than the doctor's prescriptions."

Ernest divided his time between the sick-room and the bridge. He could not really do anything for Mr. Sinclair; but Victor wanted to know every little while how it was going with his father, and he filled the part of messenger, reporting to Mr. Sinclair the progress of the steamer, and to Victor the condition of the sufferer.

Keeping well away from Abaco light, whither the cruisers were wont to resort, the *Greyhound* pointed her bow in the direction of the Bermudas.

"I reckon we'd better make for the Bermudas first," said Thayer, "though it's just a leetle out of the straight run to Halifax. There's sure to be some of those confounded cruisers sneakin' about in these waters, and it'll be handy to have a port of refuge between here and Halifax."

Victor did not fail to catch the note of deference in the pilot's tone as he made this suggestion, and it sent a thrill of pride to his heart.

"Let us do that by all means, Mr. Thayer," he responded, striving to conceal the smile of gratification that rose to his lips; "and then," he added eagerly, as the thought flashed into his mind, "we'll be able to get a doctor there for father if he's not better by that time. There are doctors at Bermuda, aren't there?"

"Yes, lots of them," replied the pilot—"land-doctors and sea-doctors. You can have your pick; and it doesn't much matter which you take, according to my thinkin'," the last sentence betraying by its contemptuous tone in how slight esteem the old seaman held the skill of the physicians.

The first day out passed uneventfully. Mr. Sinclair grew no worse, although neither did he mend, and no cruiser put in an appearance. Several vessels were sighted at a distance, two of them being steamers ; but either they were harmless merchantmen, or, if they were cruisers, they failed to discover the *Greyhound*.

Victor stuck to his post manfully, not leaving the bridge except to snatch a little sleep or take a hurried meal. Had the entire charge of the steamer rested upon him, he could not have felt his responsibility more.

Thayer's endurance was simply wonderful. He seemed to need neither rest nor sleep. So long as he had plenty of food (and this he never failed to see to) he could go on indefinitely—active, watchful, resolute, one of the last men in the world to admit defeat in any cause he had taken up.

It was not until the afternoon of the second day that the cry of "Steamer ahoy!" from the look-out started the *Greyhound's* company from the sense of security which they had been enjoying.

"Where away?" demanded Thayer, the tired look on his well-bronzed countenance changing to one of intense alertness.

"Just showing up on the port side, sir," was the reply.

Both the pilot and Victor pointed their glasses in the direction indicated. At first they could not make out anything, and were beginning to hope that the look-out was mistaken. But presently the fine spars of a steamer of their own type became visible, and in a little while her whole hull could be discovered.

She was evidently steering straight for them, and although first appearances would seem to say that she was only another blockade-runner, Thayer somehow felt suspicious concerning her.

"I've got a kind of notion," said he, "that that's one of the new cruisers I heard about at Nassau. They've taken to paintin' 'em lead colour, and makin' 'em look the very picture of the blockade-runners. I reckon it's our programme to keep to ourselves;" and so the order went to the engine-room to fire up to the full.

The *Greyhound* fortunately had on board a splendid supply of the best British steam coal laid in at Nassau. Nothing could work better in the furnaces, its only fault being the dense smoke thrown out when firing up; and the course of the blockade-runner was

now marked by a huge black stream that floated out behind her.

“They’ve got anthracite on that vessel,” said the pilot, after scrutinizing the other steamer closely; “and that makes me the surer that she means mischief, for there’s no blockade-runner can get anthracite these days.”

All a-quiver with excitement and anxiety, Victor paced up and down the bridge, or paid a flying visit to the engine-room to have a word with the engineer. He felt his responsibility now as he had not done since his father had transferred to him the command. The pilot would direct the course of the steamer, but in event of the pursuer overhauling them, it would be for him to say whether to persist in flight until disabled, or to surrender at discretion. To the bottom of his heart he wished his father back again at his place.

The *Greyhound* had been going under easy steam until the cruiser was sighted, and it took some little time for her to get up full speed, during which the latter manifestly gained.

“He seems to be coming up on us,” said Victor to the pilot, in an apprehensive tone. “Are we doing our best?”

"We're up to the top notch," replied Thayer laconically. "I guess we can hold our own from this out."

Just then Ernest came up from the cabin with face full of alarm.

"Uncle's dreadfully sick!" he exclaimed; "I'm afraid he's going to die."

"Oh, I must go to him!" cried Victor, losing all thought of the cruiser in his anxiety for his father; and he hurried down to Mr. Sinclair's state-room.

The fever had reached its most critical stage, the terrible "black vomit" having set in; and it certainly seemed as if the sufferer's last hour had come. His tongue was parched and grey, his gums black, and his lips brown and bleeding, while at frequent intervals came violent spasms of vomiting, each one of which racked his poor enfeebled frame as though it would tear the life out of him.

He was perfectly conscious, but too weak to talk. Yet he did manage to say to Victor in a voice scarce more than a whisper,—

"Don't stay here, Victor; go up on deck. You can't do anything for me, and I want you to be up there."

The pride and resolution of the man were wonderful. Sick unto death as he had good reason to believe

he was, he would deny himself the comfort of having his son beside him in order that he might represent him in the command of the vessel.

Poor Victor was in a most distressing dilemma. Filial love bound him to his father's bedside, but filial obedience demanded that he should go up on deck.

At length, seeing that Mr. Sinclair seemed really distressed at his remaining by him, he tore himself away, after making Erebus promise to let him know if his father got still worse.

On returning to the bridge he found some comfort in observing that the cruiser had not materially gained while he was below.

Full six miles still separated the two vessels, and as the afternoon was waning fast, there was a good chance of night falling before the pursuer could get within range.

"What do you think of it now, pilot?" Victor asked. "Has that steamer got the legs of us?"

"Not to any great extent," replied Thayer, with a grim smile; "but there's no tellin' yet. He's gained considerable since we first sighted him, and we'll have to hold him off till night to get away from him; but I reckon if our engines work along all right, we can do it."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

THE burden of his cares and responsibilities now pressed upon Victor in a way never felt before. With his father lying in the cabin, sick unto death for aught he knew, and a Federal cruiser in hot pursuit, to be overtaken by which meant the ruin of their enterprise that had hitherto fared so prosperously, he verily needed a stout heart and a clear head.

Both of these excellent qualities he showed to an extent that filled the pilot and the rest of the steamer's company with astonishment and admiration. He seemed to have grown ten years older within the past forty-eight hours, and there was no mistaking the air of resolution and dignity with which he bore himself. He was determined to show himself not unworthy of the trust his stricken father had reposed in him, and to do everything that Mr. Sinclair would have done had he been at his post.

As they were working northward, night did come on with the suddenness it did in the tropics. There was something of a twilight, and before darkness fell it seemed quite clear that the cruiser had made a considerable gain, although still too far behind to begin firing.

There would be no moon until midnight, and the *Greyhound's* policy was to make the most of the hours intervening to shake off her persistent pursuer. No lights therefore were allowed to be seen, and the utmost care was taken to prevent sparks issuing from the smoke-stack.

"I reckon we can manage to give him the slip before morning, even if we've got to let a boat go," said Thayer, alluding to the device sometimes practised of launching a boat with a lighted lantern at its mast-head, and then steaming away at full speed in another direction.

But Victor's sharp wits had hit upon another plan.

"We're making straight for the Bermudas now, aren't we, Mr. Thayer?" he asked.

"Just as straight as I ken steer," was the pilot's answer.

"And Halifax is off that way, isn't it?" continued Victor, pointing in a north-westerly direction.

"That's about where it lies," replied Thayer, wondering what the boy was driving at.

"Well now, look here," said Victor, in a half-hesitating, half-eager manner, as if not quite sure how his suggestion would be received: "the Yankees know we're running for the Bermudas, and they'll keep right on after us all night. Wouldn't it be a good trick to change our course for Halifax instead of the Bermudas? and then, if they don't get on to our game, they'll wake up in the morning to find that we're not in sight anywhere."

The pilot's face lit up as Victor spoke, and when he had finished, he brought his broad palm down upon the boy's shoulder so heavily as to stagger him.

"Young man, you've just hit it!" he exclaimed, with unwonted enthusiasm. "Where were my own old wits that they didn't think of that?" and at once he proceeded to change the steamer's course so as to point her for Halifax.

Proud and delighted at the reception of his suggestion, Victor hurried below to see how his father was, and to tell him what had been done.

To his unspeakable relief he found that within the past couple of hours Mr. Sinclair had taken a decided turn for the better. The distressing "black vomit"

had ceased, the fever seemed to be abating, and he was resting more easily.

The unwearied Erebus sat beside him, dropping little bits of ice into the parched mouth, and gently fanning the hot face; while Ernest, worn out with watching, had fallen asleep upon the sofa.

"Massa be all right again bery soon," whispered Erebus, a beautiful expression of joy illuminating his features. "No fear of Yellow Jack getting him now."

"If there isn't, it's because you wouldn't let him, you dear old fellow," responded Victor warmly, while tears of joy and gratitude filled his eyes. "You've done father more good than all the medicines, and we'll never forget what a blessing you've been to us."

It was now the negro's turn to be moved. Never before had Victor spoken to him so affectionately. The great eyes glistened, and the big mouth twitched convulsively. Had he been on deck he would probably have given vent to his feelings in an explosive shout.

But this was not to be thought of, so he was fain to keep himself under control, and to make answer with quivering lips,—

"Dose be bery good words, Massa Victor; dey make dis nigger's heart jump."

Just then Mr. Sinclair awoke from the doze in which he had been lying, and seeing Victor, stretched out his hand to him.

"I'm going to get better, Vic," he murmured. "The worst is over now. How are you getting on?"

Victor in a few words detailed what had taken place, and Mr. Sinclair expressed his entire approval.

"You've done the very best thing under the circumstances," he said, "and I feel sanguine now of everything coming out all right after all."

Victor then returned to his place on the bridge, where he spent the remainder of the night, although Hank Thayer urged him to go below and have a good sleep.

When day broke the sea was eagerly swept for signs of the cruiser. But there was absolutely nothing in sight, and with an easy mind Victor now went to his berth for the rest he so greatly needed.

The remainder of the run to Halifax went by without interruption; and as the *Greyhound* entered that famous harbour, Victor was able to have some fun at the expense of his foes that he hugely relished.

As soon as the dangerous outlying reefs of Cape Sable had been passed, Thayer steered well in towards the Nova Scotia shore, with every foot of which he

was thoroughly familiar, having made many a trip in his younger days from Boston to Halifax.

"We're a sight safer inside the three-mile limit than outside of it," he said, with a shrewd smile. "All the Yankee cruisers afloat darsen't touch us here; we're in British territory now."

It was not naturally an attractive coast, being mostly rock-bound and forbidding; but Victor thought it almost beautiful, it brought such a sense of security to his overwearyed spirit because of the immunity from capture its nearness implied.

Keeping on at three-quarters speed, the *Greyhound* arrived off the outer entrance to Halifax harbour at the same time with a large steamer which had come down from the North.

Perfectly safe as they knew themselves to be, yet the sight of this powerful vessel, whose character could not be mistaken for a moment, sent an apprehensive thrill through the blockade-runner's company.

"It's just as well we are in British territory," said Thayer dryly. "Ef that ain't the *Oneida*, I'm considerable mistaken. I reckon her commander 'ud have liked nothin' better than to have run acrost us on the high seas."

"Is that the *Oneida*?" asked Victor, with intense

interest. "I heard a good deal about her in Nassau. They say she's caught more blockade-runners than any other cruiser."

While he was speaking an idea came into his mind that caused him to give a little jump, and to snap his fingers exultantly. He would now exercise his authority to have some amusement at the expense of the enemy.

Without consulting Thayer he ordered all the Confederate flags they had on board to be displayed, and soon some half-dozen of them were fluttering saucily in the breeze right before the eyes of the Northerners.

"Say, what's your little game now?" asked the pilot wonderingly.

"Oh, I just want to let the Yankees know that our flag still flies," answered Victor, his eyes sparkling with excitement. "The sight of it may do them good, you know."

Thayer laughed. He could quite understand the boy's humour, and had no objections to offer.

But Victor was not content even with this audacious display of hostile bunting. He would vex the souls of the Northerners still further, and so, as the two vessels reached George's Island side by side, he called the crew together on the after-deck, and com-

manded them to sing Southern songs as loudly as they knew how.

The spectacle of the two steamers coming up the harbour bow and bow—the one dark, grim, and silent ; the other gay with flags and ringing with song—was a very strange one, and attracted crowds of the Hali-gonians to the wharves.

They were not long in sizing up the situation, and then cheer after cheer rolled out across the dancing waves ; for it was the same at Halifax as at Nassau—the general current of sympathy ran with the South, and the blockade-runners were all heroes, while the men of the North were regarded with an antipathy no less illogical than undeserved.

The cruiser went on up the harbour to the naval anchorage, but the *Greyhound* halted just off the wharves ; and hardly had her anchor splashed into the water than she was surrounded by a swarm of boats.

No objection being offered, the visitors crowded up on deck, and Victor found himself the target of more questions than he could manage to answer.

There were newspaper reporters hungry for details of the trip, Southern refugees overflowing with congratulations, runners from hotels and business estab-

lishments soliciting patronage, and many with no business in particular.

Thayer, considering that his duties ended with the safe bringing of the steamer into port, went to his cabin to put on some shore-going togs. Victor was therefore left to meet the mob of visitors alone, until Ernest came to his assistance.

They satisfied the intruders to the best of their ability, and after an hour or so were left to themselves, with the comfortable conviction that they had done their utmost to please everybody.

The first thing to be arranged was the removal of Mr. Sinclair to the hospital. This made it necessary that the *Greyhound* should haul in to one of the wharves. Accordingly Thayer went ashore to secure a berth for her.

He had no difficulty in doing this, for he was received cordially in all quarters ; and before sundown the blockade-runner was snugly moored in a convenient location, and Mr. Sinclair had comfortable quarters in the hospital, where, with the best of medical care and nursing, his complete recovery would be only a question of time.

Since little could be done until he was again able to assume the direction of affairs, and Thayer under-

took the charge of the vessel in the meantime, the boys had abundant leisure to spend in making the acquaintance of Halifax and its people.

They found much to attract them in the quaint seaport, that in so many ways seemed as if it must have been transplanted bodily from old England and set down in the New World.

The long, narrow streets, lined for the most part with wooden buildings which, owing to the universal use of soft coal, were of a uniform smudgy grey colour from the heavy deposits of soot; the great citadel towering up behind the city, the broad grassy slope of its glacis affording peaceful pasturage for cattle, but the black muzzles of heavy guns that protruded from its embrasures showing its readiness for war; the superb harbour penetrating far inland, and so completely sheltered by its forest-crowned shores that no storm, however severe, could harm vessels within its protection; the picturesque country that stretched beyond the city to the north and east and west, offering drives and walks of enchanting beauty,—the boys got pleasure from them all, and there was no fear of the time hanging upon their hands.

But what particularly interested them was the

constant presence of the redcoats and bluejackets. There are always soldiers and sailors at Halifax, it being one of Great Britain's most important military and naval stations in the colonies. Now, however, owing to the war in the United States, and the possibility of complications arising, the number of ships and regiments had been greatly augmented. The streets fairly swarmed with Tommy Atkinses, swinging their light canes as jauntily as if they owned the whole place; and Jack-tars with jolly faces and rolling gait, as full of fun and freaks as schoolboys.

The boys could not help comparing these well-fed, well-clothed, well-drilled warriors with the soldiers and sailors of their own country, sadly to the latter's disadvantage.

"If our men were only in as good shape as these chaps," said Victor, with a profound sigh, "we'd soon have the North well beaten. Oh! why doesn't England give us a hand?" he exclaimed in a tone of reproach, as though it were greatly to England's discredit that she did not do so.

"It's strange the English Government don't help us," said Ernest, "for all the English people we've come across want us to win."

"I can't understand it at all," returned Victor. "It's too bad they won't, for we need help badly enough, dear knows."

It was natural that the boys' minds should be filled with wonder and impatience at what seemed to them the inexplicable and provoking delay of the British to take the Southern side. They had always been led to believe that they would do it, and almost without exception the English people they encountered expressed themselves in hearty sympathy with the Confederate cause. Still the expected assistance was not forthcoming, and in the meantime the struggle was becoming harder and harder to sustain.

They soon came to know some of the officers, both military and naval, and freely expressed their feelings to them, but they could give them no comfort. The intentions of England in the matter were veiled in profound mystery which no one could pierce.

One of the pleasantest places of resort in the Nova Scotia capital was the Horticultural Gardens, a semi-public institution at the back of the city where the military bands played on certain afternoons, and there were shady promenades adorned with flower-beds, and smooth-shaven lawns for croquet

and archery, then much in vogue in fashionable society.

Hither came the *élite* of the city on fine afternoons to chat and gossip and flirt with the officers, making a brilliant scene that the boys found amusement in observing.

It was within the first week after their arrival that they were strolling along one of the paths which had a thick-set hedge on the left, when a sudden turn brought them face to face with three men so busily engaged in conversation that they did not notice their approach.

The moment Victor's eye fell upon the middle member of the trio a startling change took place in him. His face went swiftly scarlet and then white; his eyes flamed as if with sudden madness; his frame quivered like a sharply-struck harp-string, and then stiffened into an attitude of tense concentration like that of a panther preparing to spring.

"Silas Fitch!" he cried, in a voice that was almost a scream. "You miserable scoundrel! I've got you now," and he flung himself upon the traitor with such impetuous fury as to bear him backwards to the ground.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### BEFORE THE STIPENDIARY.

THE surprise of Victor's sudden attack upon Fitch was so complete that for a moment or two no attempt at interference was offered.

Then the latter's companions, recovering their self-possession, had laid hold of Victor to pull him off, when Ernest interposed.

"Leave him alone!" he shouted. "He can't give him any more than he deserves."

"He must let him up anyway, and give him a fair show," said one of the strangers, renewing his efforts at a separation of the struggling combatants.

This appealed to Ernest's sense of fair play, and with an assenting nod to the speaker, he grasped Victor's arm, whispering,—

"Let him up, Vic; you can whip him standing."

Victor allowed himself to be pulled to his feet,

and then stood facing Fitch, his face flaming with almost murderous fury, and his fists clinched until the knuckles were white.

Fitch's countenance presented a strange mixture of emotions: surprise, shame, and sullen rage were written on his features. Victor's unlooked-for appearance had taken him altogether aback, and his furious assault, which he would have anticipated had he seen him approaching, so demoralized him that although he was far from being an arrant coward, and was much Victor's superior in size and strength, he had been unable to make any adequate defence.

As the two stood confronting each other—Victor exalted by his righteous wrath, and Fitch debased by the sense of guilt even his small soul could not shut out from itself—they presented an effective picture.

"What's all this about?" asked one of Fitch's companions, an officer on board a Federal man-of-war then in port. "You can't be fighting here, you know; you'll both be arrested."

"He's a spy!" panted Victor, pointing his finger of scorn at Fitch, who visibly winced under the charge. "He tried to betray our vessel when we

were running the blockade ;” and then the recollection of the fellow’s baseness inflaming him afresh, he made another spring at him.

But this time interference came from a new source. The attention of a policeman had been attracted, and he hurried up just in time to prevent Victor’s second attack.

“Hullo !” he cried. “How’s this ? I arrest you for creating a disturbance.”

The advent of the “peeler,” as the blue-coated, silver-buttoned guardians of the peace were called in Halifax, produced a profound sensation in the little group, and caused a crowd to gather around them with wonderful celerity.

Victor, realizing the seriousness of the situation, laid a strong hand upon himself, and made no attempt to break away from the policeman ; although Ernest, yielding to a schoolboy impulse, plucked his sleeve, whispering,—

“Let us scoot before we’re all taken up.”

Explanations were promptly offered and apologies made, but the “peeler” would have none of them. Having satisfied himself that Victor was the aggressor, he was determined to hale him to prison, telling Fitch to appear against him the next morning when the

case would be tried before the stipendiary magistrate.

Maintaining his composure in a way that impressed all the onlookers, and especially the two officers who were with Fitch, one of whom remarked to the other in an admiring tone that "he was a regular Johnny Reb—as full of fight as a wild cat," Victor expressed his willingness to go with his captor to the police-station, but suggested that a cab should be procured, for which he would pay.

This quite suited the "peeler," and so they drove off, leaving Fitch with his friends, who now looked somewhat askance at him.

Ernest, of course, accompanied Victor. He was so appalled at the idea of his cousin being under arrest that he could scarcely speak. Had it been at home in Charleston, it might have been only a laughing matter; but here in this strange city, where everything seemed to be so orderly and quiet, the creating a disturbance in the public pleasure-grounds might prove a very grave offence.

With Victor, on the other hand, a spirit of gay recklessness had succeeded his wild outburst, and he chatted and joked with the policeman while they drove along as though they were upon some pleasure-trip.

He was confident that the only penalty would be a fine, and he was quite willing to pay any sum the magistrate might impose, for the sake of the buffet-ing he had given Fitch.

On their arrival at the police-station, Victor was brought before the sergeant in charge, and the peeler's statement duly recorded against him in a big book.

The sergeant was a big, benevolent-looking man; and having entered the charge, he gave Victor a scrutinizing glance through his spectacles.

"You're not anxious to stay here all night, I take it?" he said, with a smile that implied a negative answer.

"I suppose I've got to," responded Victor bravely, while Ernest's heart gave a throb of protest as he glanced through the iron grating into the long corridor leading to the cells.

"Not if you can get bail," said the sergeant. "Haven't you any friends here?"

"Why, yes," replied Victor, his face brightening as he began to catch the officer's meaning. "My father is here." Then he stopped, and a shadow fell on his countenance. "But he's in the hospital. He's had yellow fever. He can't do anything for me."

"But you know somebody else, don't you?" con-

tinued the officer, evidently sympathizing with the boy, and disposed to help him in his straits.

"Why, yes you do," broke in Ernest, whose brow had been working busily. "You know Mr. Morrow, at whose wharf our steamer is lying."

"Aha!" smiled the sergeant, looking well pleased at the suggestion. "You know Mr. Morrow, do you? Well, if he'll be so kind as to come here and give his word that you'll be on hand to-morrow morning, nothing more will be needed. There's no man thought more of in this city than Mr. Morrow.—Can't you," turning to Ernest, "go off for Mr. Morrow and ask him if he'll look in here for a minute?"

"Of course I can," responded Ernest, jumping up with radiant face. "I'll go right away."

Hailing a cab Ernest drove rapidly to Mr. Morrow's office, and was fortunate in finding him in and disengaged.

In breathless headlong fashion he related what had taken place; and as soon as the merchant understood the situation, he rose, saying,—

"I'll go with you immediately. Young Mr. Sinclair must not be left at the station a minute longer."

They returned in the cab, and Mr. Morrow having

assured the sergeant that not only Victor but he himself would be on hand next morning, to have the matter thoroughly inquired into, the officer, seeming well pleased at the turn in affairs, told Victor he was free to go.

Thanking him warmly for his kindness and courtesy, and mentally resolving to send him some more substantial token of his gratitude, Victor went off rejoicing, accompanying Mr. Morrow back to his office in order to consult with him as to the trial.

Before they parted the kind merchant had thoughtfully arranged for his own lawyer to appear on Victor's behalf; for although the boy had no thought of attempting to evade in any way the just penalty for his offence, it was as well that his interests should be properly protected.

No mention was made to Mr. Sinclair about the meeting with Fitch and its consequences. It could only give him worry, and where ignorance was bliss, so to speak, nothing would be gained by imparting knowledge. He was convalescing rapidly, and in a few days more would be able to return to the *Greyhound*.

The following morning found Victor in a state of excitement that he strove vainly to conceal. He

had never so much as been in a court-room before and the mystery with which its proceedings were therefore enshrouded for him gave an additional edge to his apprehension.

Happily no sense of disgrace clouded his brave spirit. True, he was to be tried for a common assault in a public place; but he felt in his heart, and was free to say, that he would act in precisely the same way again if the opportunity offered.

Not only Ernest, but Erebus, Hank Thayer, and several of the officers of the *Greyhound* accompanied him to the police-court, where they were presently joined by Mr. Morrow and the lawyer, a handsome young man with gold-rimmed eye-glasses who seemed to think the whole affair more of a joke than anything else.

With quivering nerves, parched lips, and beating heart Victor took his seat on the bench just in front of the prisoner's dock, and behind the seats assigned to the counsel. Mr. Morrow was on one side of him, and Ernest on the other. Erebus, looking like a mute at a funeral, so impressive was the solemnity of his sable countenance, stood against the wall, where he could keep his eyes on Victor's face. The big, warm heart of the negro was profoundly concerned,

and if such a thing as an escape from the clutches of the law were to be attempted, he was ready to do and dare to the utmost.

Presently the stipendiary magistrate entered in rustling silk robes, and everybody rose to do him honour. He was a man of small stature, but of great dignity of bearing. His countenance, which was set about with abundant grey hair and whiskers, and adorned with a pair of heavy gold spectacles, had an austere expression that relaxed for a moment as his eye fell upon Mr. Morrow, to whom he bowed graciously.

The crier having duly announced the opening of the court, the wretched-looking occupants of the cells were first disposed of. These were some ten in all, frowzy, dishevelled women, and tattered, degraded men, ill-fated victims of the drink curse, bearing on their brutalized features the story of their deplorable bondage to rum.

Victor was not a little shocked at the brief, business-like way in which the magistrate dealt with these "D.D's.," as they were facetiously termed in Halifax (meaning "Drunk and Disorderly"). One by one their names were called, and as they stood in the dock the peeler who had "run them in" gave his evidence.

Not a word in extenuation or rebuttal was allowed.

"Six dollars or sixty days," said his honour, and that ended the case. The prisoner sat down muttering vain protests, and his neighbour stood up in his place to receive a lighter or heavier sentence, according to the amount of trouble given the guardians of the peace.

When the dock had been cleared, Victor's case came on. As white as a sheet of paper, and feeling as though he had been suddenly smitten dumb, yet keeping a firm grip upon his faculties, he stood up at the call of his name.

The stipendiary peered at him through his gold-rimmed spectacles with a look half quizzical, half judicial. Perhaps he was not entirely ignorant of the circumstances of the case, for Mr. Morrow had been in his private room a little while before the opening of court.

The charge was read by the clerk, the policeman who had arrested Victor at the Horticultural Gardens stated what he had seen, and then Silas Fitch was called as witness.

So absorbed had Victor been in his situation and surroundings, that until the mention of the traitor's name he had not once thought of him.

Now he glanced eagerly about the court-room for the man he so despised and detested.

But there was no sign of him. Although he had given his name to the policeman, and promised to appear against Victor, neither he nor his companions were present.

The crier having called for him loudly three times without avail, the magistrate turned to Victor, and, with a look of much benignity, said,—

“Well, my young sir, since the man you assaulted evidently does not intend to appear, the court would like to hear what you have to say for yourself.”

Victor's face brightened. This was an opportunity he had not expected. Hesitating a little at first from mere nervousness, he soon found freedom of speech, and in a very clear, concise way told the whole story concerning Fitch, and the reasons for his bitter animosity towards him.

The frank, graphic narrative interested not only the magistrate, but all those in the court-room; and when Victor finished, a subdued murmur of applause showed how his recital had been appreciated.

With a still more benign expression than before the stipendiary looked towards Mr. Morrow.

“Your young friend's conduct has not been without

palliation ; but the law must be duly recognized. I will simply impose the nominal fine of one dollar."

At this lenient sentence the court-room broke out into a hearty round of applause that the clerk made but a slight pretence of deprecating, and Victor became the subject of a shower of congratulations from the friends about him.

Thanking Mr. Morrow warmly for his kind offices, he, accompanied by Ernest, hastened off to the hospital to tell his father all that had transpired.

Mr. Sinclair was considerably disturbed by what he heard, although he found no fault with Victor.

"That fellow's presence here may give us trouble," he said, with a grave look. "We'll be watched night and day now, and may have hard work getting away from here without being gobbled up by a cruiser as soon as we're at sea."

In this apprehension Mr. Sinclair was not far wrong. With a fierce passion for revenge added to his hunger for pelf, Fitch could not fail to be a troublesome customer.

So soon as the doctor permitted, Mr. Sinclair returned to the *Greyhound*, and preparations for her departure were pressed forward with the utmost dispatch.

An admirably-assorted cargo of goods that would

return a profit of ten, twenty, or even thirty fold at Charleston was easily procured, with, however, one notable exception.

No "hardware" of the kind most in demand was allowed on board. Such goods were contraband of war, and every precaution was taken by the authorities against their being shipped.

Competent labour being abundant, the loading went merrily on, until at last, with hold full of all sorts of commodities, and bunkers overflowing with the best steam coal, the good steamer *Greyhound* was ready for her venturesome voyage.

The night before she was to start, Mr. Sinclair had a visit from a Southerner then living in the city, who told him that the *Oneida*, which had apparently gone out to sea the day before, was in reality hiding in a small harbour to the south of the entrance to Halifax, ready to dash out upon the blockade-runner as soon as she appeared.

This was serious news indeed, and Mr. Sinclair felt as though he hardly knew what to do, until Thayer suggested that they should try slipping out through the Eastern Passages, which he thought the *Greyhound* could manage at high tide even with her full load.

"But who'll show us the way?" asked Mr. Sinclair, who was in a mood to attempt anything, however risky.

"Oh, that's all right," responded Thayer cheerfully. "I'll get one of the fishermen that live at the passage to pilot us. He'll take us through right enough."

"We'll try it then," cried Mr. Sinclair, springing to his feet with all uncertainty vanished from his countenance. "Get your fisherman, Thayer; we'll start with the first tide that serves."

## CHAPTER XIX.

### IN TWOFOLD PERIL.

THE time chosen for the departure of the *Greyhound* was two hours before midnight, the tide then serving best. There was no fog, but clouds covered the face of the sky, blotting out all the stars, and making it difficult for even the keenest eye to see more than a hundred yards ahead.

For any but one who had been born, bred, and brought up in the Eastern Passage, and who therefore knew the precise locality of every boulder and bar with his eyes shut, to have attempted the taking out of so large a vessel as the blockade-runner, would have been simply daring Providence.

Not so, however, with old Eliphalet Mosher. He had swum, and sculled, and fished, and trawled in the passage from end to end for half a century past, and, moreover, had had ample experience in the piloting of vessels. If the *Greyhound* could get

through at all, he certainly was the man to show her the way.

With as little commotion as possible—for who knew how many spies might be about?—the steamer warped out into the stream and pointed her sharp bow oceanward.

Her whole company, with the exception of Mr. Sinclair, would have been glad enough to double the length of their stay in Halifax. They had found the Bluenose capital a very sociable, friendly, pleasant place, offering many varieties of diversion; and its climate was so refreshingly cool after the debilitating heat of the West Indies, that it made them feel like new men.

But, naturally enough, the long break in his plans had made Mr. Sinclair very restless and impatient to win his way back to Charleston, where no doubt ere this they had come to the conclusion that he must have been captured by the Northerners.

To linger at Halifax would not in any way have lessened the risks to be run. On the contrary, it might increase them by giving time for other cruisers besides the *Oneida* to gather to the chase.

“We’ve got the smartest bit of work before us we’ve had yet, Thayer,” he said, gathering himself to-

gether as though preparing for some physical exertion. "We're in a fair way to be chased clear into Charleston, if we're lucky enough to get there. It's not the *Oneida* alone we have to reckon with, but many others that have been warned to be on the look-out for us."

"You're right enough there, sir," responded Thayer. "They've sent word to Boston and New York, you may be sure, that we were here; and, what's more, they'll telegraph our leaving as soon as they find it out."

"So they will, Thayer," said Mr. Sinclair, with a start. "I hadn't thought of that. That miserable scoundrel Fitch will do his dirtiest to have us nabbed this time. I wonder is he on board the *Oneida*?"

"I reckon not," answered Thayer. "I heard tell that he went off to Boston the morning after Victor knocked him down in the gardens. Like enough he went after another ship, so as to make a sure thing of it."

While they were talking, the *Greyhound*, under Mosher's guidance, had been moving at half-speed down the harbour past George's Island, honeycombed with batteries, from whose ports projected powerful

Armstrong guns, and on into the entrance to the Eastern Passage.

This curious branch of the harbour, which separated Macnab's Island from the mainland, was about a mile and a half in length, but not more than a quarter of a mile in width, and was rarely used except by small fishing-smacks. Very careful navigation would be required to take a deep-draught vessel through it, because of the shallowness of its waters in many parts, and the dangerous reefs that almost closed it in to seaward.

There were hardly any dwellings on the island, a good part of which was a military reserve; but the mainland was lined with fishermen's cottages, from whose tiny windows the lights twinkled in cheerful fashion.

"How quiet and snug and comfortable they all seem to be, Ernie; don't they?" said Victor, as the two boys were standing together on the bridge. "It almost makes one envy them when you think of the risks we've got to run, and what we'll have to put up with if we're captured."

"Yes, indeed," assented Ernest. "I don't mind saying that I'm getting kind of tired of this being always on the stretch in one way or another. I'd

take very kindly to a little holiday for a while ; wouldn't you, Vic ? ”

“ That I would,” responded Victor emphatically ; “ and if we get into Charleston all right this time, I hope father will lay up for some time. We've been long enough away from home, anyway.”

As the *Greyhound* drew near the outer entrance to the passage, her speed was slackened down to not more than three knots an hour.

“ It was a sight better to be sure than sorry,” said Eliphalet Mosher, as solemnly as if he had invented the adage ; and his practical wisdom was abundantly illustrated when, just as the steamer turned towards Devil's Island light, her bow struck an outlying gravel bank, and ran into it with a crunching sound that sent a thrill of alarm through all on board.

But Mosher seemed not a whit perturbed.

“ Oh, that ain't nothin',” he remarked, shifting the large quid that made a lump in his cheek. “ I'll soon get her free agen. The gravel won't hurt her.”

The paddle-wheels were reversed, and all the crew ordered to go astern. Then the engines were set working up to their utmost strength, and in a few minutes the steamer slid gently off into deep water again.

That was the only time she touched. Picking his

way with infinite care and amazing skill, Mosher took his charge past Devil's Island out into the long rollers that came straight from the ocean, and then with more big gold pieces in his greasy old wallet than he had ever had there before, he dropped into his "whaler," which had been towing astern, hoisted its brown sails, and vanished into the darkness; while Hank Thayer, with much satisfaction, resumed the direction of the blockade-runner.

Of course the first thing was to sweep the shore-line for signs of the *Oneida*. She might be looked for anywhere beyond York Redoubt, her hiding-place having no doubt been in Herring Cove or Prospect Harbour.

More than one set of steamer's lights could be made out, but it was impossible to tell whether or not any of them belonged to the cruiser. It would certainly be carrying lights, for to go without them on that much-frequented coast would be to run altogether too great a risk of collision.

"Can you make him out at all, Thayer?" asked Mr. Sinclair, whose sickness had left him in a very nervous condition, and who was now pacing up and down the bridge in a restless way different from his former self.

"Not jest for sure, sir," replied Thayer, as imper-  
turbable as ever. "Like as not there was word sent  
him from Halifax as soon as we cast off, and he'll be  
lookin' out mighty sharp for us."

"Is that him coming up there?" cried Ernest, sud-  
denly pointing to lights approaching from the north-  
east, a quarter in which the others had not been  
looking for the enemy at all.

Thayer swung round and levelled his glass in the  
direction indicated.

"Jee-ru-sa-lem!" he exclaimed, following the long-  
drawn-out word with a whistle of sheer surprise.  
"Ef I ain't a chump!—hunting along shore for that  
confounded cruiser, and there he be a-comin' right up  
on us to leeward. We've got to scoot for it now, sir."

By this time the night had cleared considerably,  
the stars were shining brightly, and there was no dif-  
ficulty with good night-glasses in making out the big  
black bulk of the Federal man-of-war as he came  
steadily towards the *Greyhound* at half-speed.

Whether or not he had yet discovered the nearness  
of his eagerly-sought quarry there was nothing to  
show, but it soon must become known on board.

As silently as possible the blockade-runner was put  
at full speed, and with throbbing pulses the little

group on the bridge watched for tokens of the chase having begun.

They had not long to wait. Such light breeze as there was blew directly from the *Greyhound* to the *Oneida*, and it quickly bore the sound of the hard-driven paddle-wheels.

Instantly there soared up into the sky a hissing fiery rocket, the object of which signal greatly puzzled those on the *Greyhound*, and the chase began in real earnest.

The blockade-runner had some things in her favour at the start. In the first place, the cruiser was a full half-mile astern of her; and in the second, she was some minutes ahead of him in getting up full speed, which precious time was put to full advantage.

On the other hand, the cruiser had the inside course, so that the *Greyhound* could not hark back to the protection of the Nova Scotian shore without crossing his bows, and must needs therefore steam straight out to sea in the face of the wind that was now rising rapidly.

"We're in for it now, sir, and no mistake," said Thayer grimly to Mr. Sinclair. "It'll be an all-night chase even if we can keep him off."

"And is there any doubt of that?" Mr. Sinclair

asked anxiously. "We've got splendid coal, and the engines are all in first-class condition, aren't they?"

"Oh yes, sir," responded Thayer. "The coal and the engines are all right; but there's no knowin' what may happen, and we've got a tough customer to deal with."

Thayer was no hand at speaking comfortable words. He was prone to see the darkest side of every situation, and made no attempt to conceal his gloomy views. He really expected to give the cruiser the slip this time, but thought it best to keep a clear view of the other possibility, and consequently poor Mr. Sinclair did not get from him the note of cheer that his heart craved.

It was Victor who supplied this. He understood his father's state of mind, and sympathizing with it, sought with loving solicitude to counteract it in every way he could.

"Oh, we've got the legs of him right enough," he said confidently. "He can't catch us if he does chase all night. He'll only waste his coal for nothing."

"That's right, Vic! that's the way to talk!" exclaimed Mr. Sinclair, brightening up. "There's not a ship in the whole Yankee navy able to run the

*Greyhound* down, barring accidents, and, please God, we're not going to have any accidents."

But for the serious interest involved, the race between the two steamers might have been a very pleasantly exciting affair. It was evident that they were well matched as to speed, however much they differed in size, and that the issue of the contest really lay in the respective sea-going qualities of the two and the excellence of their machinery.

It was upon these two points that Thayer's mind misgave him, though he did not speak out his anxious thoughts. He feared the effect of the long ocean rollers upon the speed of the blockade-runner, and he doubted the ability of the engines to run on full steam for many hours without giving trouble in some way.

The farther out to sea the *Greyhound* sped the stronger grew the wind and the more lively the motion of the waves.

The sky showed signs of clouding over again, and in other ways there were indications of a change for the worse in the weather.

"There's a blow comin' on if I'm not a good deal out on my calculation," said Thayer, "and the *Greyhound* 'll have a chance to show what she can do in a storm."

“And how do you think she’ll stand a storm?” asked Mr. Sinclair, with some anxiety.

Thayer was silent for a moment, casting his eye up and down the length of the ship before replying,—

“She ought to go through it like a duck. But there’s no tellin’ until ye try. She’s loaded just right—that’s one comfort.”

Seeing that the blockade-runner had not encountered any very heavy weather since coming into Mr. Sinclair’s possession, it was but natural that they all should regard with deep concern the prospect of her having to battle with a gale in the North Atlantic. Yet there was none of them who did not infinitely prefer taking that risk to falling into the hands of their pursuers without a struggle.

The storm presently broke upon them with a suddenness quite uncommon in these northern latitudes.

It began with quick gusts of rain that stung the faces of those on deck like sharp slaps of the hand; the sky seemed to fall around the steamer, blotting out everything beyond the bulwarks; and the sea became a wild welter of foam and fury, in the midst of which the *Greyhound* tossed and pitched like a mere chip.

The barometer had given due warning of this, and

the *Greyhound's* company were not taken unprepared. The hatches were securely battened, the cabin and engine-room entrances tightly closed, the scuppers opened wide for the water to run off, and every one on deck was covered with stout oilskins, through which neither rain nor spray could find their way.

Both Thayer and Victor tried hard to persuade Mr. Sinclair to go below, for he had not yet by any means recovered his full strength, and the exposure to the fury of the elements might prove too much for him.

But he refused to leave the bridge. "No, no, no," he repeated resolutely. "I won't leave here whether we sink or swim. Whatever fate befalls us, we shall meet it all together."

Seeing that he was not to be moved, Victor then directed Erebus to keep close at his father's side, and to protect him as far as possible from the assaults of the seas, which were now beginning to break clear over the low bulwarks.

The giant understood exactly what was required of him, and fulfilled his duty so admirably that Mr. Sinclair was spared many a buffet that would otherwise have told hard upon his enfeebled frame.

The behaviour of the *Greyhound* as she wrestled

doughtily with the gale was certainly such as to fill the hearts of her company with pride and hope.

There seemed something of almost living intelligence in the way she charged at the foam-crested billows, lifted herself upon their heaving bosoms, poised for a breathless instant at the summit of the slope, and then dived down into the yeasty, hissing trough to repeat the performance.

The engines had been slowed down to half-speed, for to have kept on at top speed was out of the question in such a gale, and it was very certain that the cruiser would be compelled to take the same precaution.

Indeed the bursting of the storm had for the time almost put the cruiser out of the minds of those on board the *Greyhound*. The battle with the fell forces of wind and wave engrossed all their attention. It would be time enough to think of their pursuers when they knew that they would weather the gale.

The wind did not blow steadily. Every few minutes it broke forth into furious squalls that constituted the *Greyhound's* chief danger.

The fiendish fierceness of these attacks was appalling. There would be a momentary lull in the wild roaring of the tempest, as if the elemental demon

were taking breath, and then with a fierce war-whoop—for it could be likened to nothing else—the squall would smite down upon the steamer as if determined this time to bury her beneath the billows hungering for their prey.

Again and again the assault was made in vain. Bravely the stanch steamer yielded to the blow, only to rise again buoyantly, and throwing off the unwelcome water as would a Newfoundland dog to renew the contest undaunted.

Presently, as if bound to win, by foul means if not by fair, the wind shifted, and with such suddenness that even shrewd old Thayer was taken unawares.

The seas, checked in their running by this change, piled up astern of the *Greyhound* for an instant, and then came after her with awful fury.

Ernest saw the peril first.

“Look behind!” he screamed in Thayer’s ear.

The pilot turned. A strange pallor possessed his face, and his whole frame trembled.

“God help us!” he groaned in horror. “We’ll be pooped, sure!”

## CHAPTER XX.

### A STERN CHASE.

THE situation of the *Greyhound* was certainly such as to appall the stoutest heart. The sudden change in the running of the seas had thrown her into the trough of the waves for the moment, and bearing right down upon her astern was a tremendous billow, its body as black as night, its crest snow-white with foam, which the wind tore off in flying flakes of spray.

This was revealed by the grey of dawn, which had in part dispelled the darkness, yet cast so weird a light over everything that the whole scene seemed more like some nightmare vision than actual fact.

As Thayer cried, "We'll be pooped," he flung himself upon the wheel with all his strength, and endeavoured to give a quick turn to the course of the steamer.

But at the moment she was, owing to the fierce

opposition of the seas, making hardly enough headway to render good steering possible, and she responded too slowly to the rudder to enable her to evade the danger.

With an awful roar, and the hissing as of ten thousand serpents, the billow broke upon the *Greyhound's* deck.

For one harrowing instant it seemed as if the storm had conquered, and that the brave little steamer would never rise again. The tremendous weight of water sank her to the scuppers, and in spite of all the precautions taken great quantities of it poured into the cabin, engine-room, and fore-castle.

The engineers and stokers scrambled up on deck with ghastly faces, fully persuaded that the vessel was foundering, while the steam pouring out from the ventilators showed that the water had even attacked the furnace fires.

On the bridge the force of the billow had made itself no less felt. Thayer alone, thanks to his desperate grip upon the wheel, was not stirred from his post, the others being flung hither and thither to great peril of life and limb.

Ernest went clear off the bridge into the waist of the steamer, where he wallowed for some time in the

suffocating brine that seemed striving to drown him there, but had to give up the attempt as he struggled to his feet and fought his way back to the bridge.

Victor was hurled against the binnacle, and his head coming violently in contact with the brass mountings, he received a nasty blow that wellnigh stunned him, yet he managed to hold on to the post until the force of the sea was spent.

As for Mr. Sinclair, well was it that Erebus had been deputed to safeguard him. Only the gigantic strength of the faithful negro saved him from being caught up like a feather and whirled off over the side into the wild welter of the waves.

When the pilot cried out, Erebus threw one arm about his master, and grasping the rail of the bridge with the other, braced himself to meet the ocean's onset.

It took every ounce of strength he possessed to stand the strain, but happily his mighty sinews proved equal to their task; and although shaken by the shock, he did not budge, nor let go of Mr. Sinclair, who thus was spared all injury.

And what of the *Greyhound*? The ocean in its fell fury had struck her a cruel blow, but it was not to be a fatal one.

For only a minute did she stagger under it, and then her fine sea-going qualities asserted themselves.

Up out of the frothing, hissing trough she rose dauntlessly, the water pouring in cascades from her decks, and hope once more thrilled every heart.

Back to their places went the engineers and stokers. In quick response to the pilot's command, the sailors set the jib and fore-sail under double-reef, and thus assisted the stanch steamer lifted herself from sea to sea, as if daring old Neptune to do his worst.

From that time on the gale rapidly moderated, and by nine o'clock the wind had fallen to an ordinary breeze, although, of course, the seas were still running high.

"We came out of that better than I reckoned we would when I saw that big fellow bearin' right down on us," said Thayer, with a satisfied smile. "She's a rattlin' good little boat this," he went on, giving an affectionate look over the steamer, "and only needs the right kind of handlin' to weather any gale."

"And you're the man that knows how to handle her, Thayer," responded Mr. Sinclair warmly. "If anybody else had been at the helm, we'd never have got out of that scrape."

The pilot chuckled, and shook his head as though to imply that such seamanship was not so very wonderful; but Mr. Sinclair's praise had warmed his old heart all the same, for he thoroughly enjoyed being praised.

Of the cruiser there was not a sign. Whether on the approach of the storm he had thought it best to put back to Halifax, or had changed his course so as to keep nearer the coast, there was no telling. The sea was clear from horizon to horizon, and the blockade-runner could go whither she pleased, naught appearing to make her afraid.

This being so the question was discussed as to whether or not they should make a straight run for Charleston, or go to the Bermudas first. Thayer was in favour of the latter course.

"Ye see," he argued, "the cruisers are like to be thick as skeeters along the coast, and as fast as we give one the go-by there'll be another waitin' to pick us up. But if we strike the Bermudas first, and then take a bee-line on to Charleston, we'll miss the most of them."

This certainly seemed sound enough reasoning; but Mr. Sinclair was so impatient to get back to Charleston that he was reluctant to be persuaded.

"But see here, Thayer," he urged: "we might just as well take our chances the one way as the other. There's sure to be cruisers between here and the Bermudas, as well as between here and Charleston. We'll have to run the gauntlet of them in either case, and the shorter we can make the trip the less the risk of being caught."

Here Victor, who had been listening in silence, interposed.

"There's one thing, father, you haven't thought of," he said modestly. "If we go to the Bermudas, we may be able to get some news from Charleston. Perhaps the Yankees have taken it by this time, and it would be dreadful if we ran in without knowing it."

"Impossible!" cried Mr. Sinclair, starting up and looking at Victor as indignantly as if he had said something insulting. "What makes you talk such nonsense? Charleston's not taken by the Yankees, and never will be."

Although never unduly assertive, Victor always had the courage of his conviction. He had not spoken at random, but in all sincerity, and very quietly but firmly he replied,—

"Well, you know, father, what we heard in Halifax about the great preparations being made by the

Federal forces to invest Charleston by both land and sea; and if they were to succeed while we're out here knowing nothing about it, we'd be caught nicely if we ran in only to find the Yankees in full possession."

"Oh yes, do let us go to the Bermudas first," chimed in Ernest, who, to tell the truth, was more moved to this view by curiosity to see the island than by any opinion as to the respective wisdom of the two courses.

Finding himself in a hopeless minority, and being deeply impressed by what Victor had said, even though he refused to entertain for a moment the supposition that Charleston could have fallen into the hands of the enemy, Mr. Sinclair finally yielded.

"Have it as you wish then," he said. "Every hour that I'm away from Charleston now seems like a day, and for my own part I'd rather take the chances of a straight run. But perhaps you're nearer right than I am. We'll touch at the Bermudas, anyway."

The weather that followed the gale was as fine as heart could wish. The sun shone clear in the azure vault of heaven, and the waves, as blue as the sky, except when curled into crisp white crests, seemed full of joy and laughter as the *Greyhound* sped swiftly through them.

A brisk breeze blew from the north, and to take

advantage of this every stitch of canvas the blockade-runner could carry was set, the effect being a considerable addition to the vessel's speed.

For all save Mr. Sinclair, who was worrying too much to enjoy anything, the day succeeding the storm was one of the pleasantest spent upon the steamer.

The *Greyhound* bowled along merrily under the double impulse of wind and steam at a fourteen-knot-an-hour rate that was very inspiring, the breeze tempered the air so that it was just warm enough, no cruiser intruded his unwelcome presence upon the peaceful scene, and so with minds entirely at ease for the time being, those on board the steamer were enabled to enjoy a much-needed rest.

The next day was no less fine, and as they were due to reach the Bermudas before sundown, even Mr. Sinclair grew cheerful.

He had now come round entirely to Victor's ideas, and was grateful to him for having advanced them. Charleston might possibly have been taken, and if such were the case, they would stand a good chance of learning all about it at Bermuda, which had been for some time past a much-frequented haven for blockade-runners and other Southern ships.

While they were breakfasting in the cabin, feeling

in good spirits at the prospect of the early termination of the first stage in the trip, the disturbing cry of "Sail ho!" came from the bridge, where the first mate was tending the wheel.

There was an immediate rush for the deck, although the meal had not been more than half finished, and in an instant, with glasses clapped to their eyes, the whole party were anxiously sweeping the horizon.

They had not long to look. Six miles astern there showed up plainly the heavy spars of an unmistakable war-vessel making straight for the blockade-runner, whose presence had, of course, been betrayed by her sails spread to the breeze.

"The *Oneida* again!" cried Thayer, in a tone of undisguised dismay, "and coming right up on us hand over fist. We're in for it now, sure enough."

The pilot's words filled every one with consternation—their harbour of refuge still a hundred miles distant, and the swiftest in the Federal fleet in full pursuit, with the whole long day to hunt its quarry.

Happily the *Greyhound* was in fine condition for the contest that had now begun, the usual precaution of cleaning the fires and raising the steam having been attended to just before the cruiser was sighted.

But allowing for everything, the chase was bound

to be a long and arduous one, and the slightest accident to the machinery or mistake in seamanship could have only one result.

With anxious faces and throbbing hearts the little group stood on the bridge watching intently the great vessel that seemed to grow steadily upon their sight.

"I reckon the *Greyhound*'s got her work cut out for her this time," said Thayer grimly, after a long look at the pursuer. "He's gainin' on us an inch in the yard."

"Oh, do you think so?" exclaimed Mr. Sinclair, in a tone of one who would fain be persuaded otherwise. "I wonder if we're doing our best? I must have a word with the engineer;" and he hurried down to the engine-room, returning presently to say,—

"Yes: Mr. Macleod says he can't give her another pound of steam. We must try some trick on the cruiser. Can you think of anything, Thayer?"

The pilot shook his grizzled head dubiously.

"Tricks don't count for much in broad daylight," he replied. "The wind may do us a good turn, but there's no tellin'."

The last words were Thayer's favourite phrase when in a quandary. He hated to acknowledge

entire helplessness, yet now had no avenue of escape to suggest. But how was the wind to help?

As the day advanced, the breeze, which was very light from the northward at daybreak, continued to freshen from that quarter. The *Greyhound* had all her canvas set, and immediately after sighting her the cruiser had covered her masts also. Now the blockade-runner carried fore and aft sails, while the *Oneida* was square-rigged, and the shrewd pilot was not slow to see an advantage to be gained in this. He accordingly had the *Greyhound's* sheets hauled flat aft, and kept the vessel close to the wind.

"If the wind holds the way it is blowing now, we may weather her yet," he remarked, with a significant hitch of his belt.

It was clear enough that head to wind the cruiser could overhaul the blockade-runner, and that off the wind his chances would probably have been equally good; but the pilot's clever seamanship now began to tell.

Slowly but surely, as the wind continued steady, the man-of-war dropped to leeward, until by mid-day the *Greyhound* had so weathered upon him that his sails had become useless.

He did not seem to find this out at first, and kept

them up for some time after they did him more harm than good. When, however, he had lost all the advantage gained in the first part of the chase, and was once more five or six miles astern, he woke up to the true state of affairs, and the snowy cloud of canvas vanished like magic, leaving the tall, tapering spars bare and black.

“Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!” cried Ernest, throwing his arms ecstatically around Victor, and dancing along the bridge with him. “The cruiser’s given it up as a bad job. He knows he can’t catch us.”

Victor joined heartily in the cheers, and Mr. Sinclair was moved by them to ejaculate fervently, “Thank God! we’ll make Charleston safely yet;” while Erebus, who was in the deck below, caught the infection, and rolled forth a cheer or two on his own account, with all the power of his mighty bass voice.

Thayer alone remained unmoved. Regarding the manifestations of joy with a half-pitying, half-indulgent smile, he remarked quietly,—

“I’m afeard ye’re jest a leetle too previous, if ye don’t mind my saying so. That fellow ain’t done with us yet, by any manner ov means, ye may depend upon it.”

The blank looks that came over the radiant coun-

tenances at the pilot's words would have been comical enough had not the situation been so serious.

"Will he keep on after us still, do you think?" asked Mr. Sinclair petulantly.

"That's my notion, sir," replied Thayer; "ye see he's coming right ahead."

He was only too correct. With the tenacity of a bloodhound he continued to follow. Evidently there was to be no respite for the blockade-runner until darkness fell, and it was still early in the afternoon.

"Lord grant the wind may hold!" murmured Mr. Sinclair, when he saw the cruiser had no thought of giving up the chase.

He might well make the prayer, for in that wind lay the *Greyhound's* only chance of escape from capture. The help that it gave her was just sufficient to equalize the speed of the two vessels, and for the next hour there was little or no change in the distance between them.

Indeed, if anything, the blockade-runner was gaining a trifle, and once more the spirits of her company began to rise, when the engineer appeared on the bridge with a face full of concern and announced that the journals were heated, and that it would be absolutely necessary to stop altogether to ease the bearings!

Refusing to believe him, Mr. Sinclair rushed to the engine-room. One glance was enough to convince him. Clouds of steam were rising from the overheated journals, as the assistant-engineer poured water upon them, and unless the bearings were eased immediately, the machinery must give way.

Faint and sick at heart, Mr. Sinclair ordered the engines to be stopped. The *Greyhound's* paddle-wheels ceased to revolve, and in a few minutes more she lay as still as a log upon the water, while the cruiser rapidly lessened the intervening distance.

At last it seemed as if the brave blockade-runner's luck had deserted her, and her brilliant career was about to close in ignominious capture.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### A BERMUDA HOLIDAY.

IN characteristically different ways the quartette on the *Greyhound's* bridge awaited the fate that now seemed inevitable.

Mr. Sinclair, yielding to utter dejection and despair—for his illness had greatly unnerved him—leaned heavily upon the railing with his head buried in his hands. He wanted to shut out the approach of the remorseless pursuers from eyes and ears until the feet of his captors should touch his deck.

Thayer, still keeping his hands on the now useless wheel, chewed fiercely at the quid which was ever in his mouth, and watched with savage look the drawing near of the cruiser.

Victor stood near his father, not attempting to comfort him by words that would have been futile, but bearing himself with that quiet dignity and self-possession which were distinguishing traits in his nature.

When the Yankees did come on board, they would find him ready to receive them with unfaltering front.

As for Ernest, he paced up and down the length of the bridge with the restless energy of a caged panther. It seemed intolerable to him to have to submit thus tamely to capture. If he had his own way he would keep the machinery running until something smashed rather than yield without further struggle to escape.

The cruiser came on with steady speed as the harrowing minutes slipped by. Soon he would be within cannon-shot, and Thayer was beginning to wonder whether he would open fire from his bow-guns just by way of making assurance doubly sure, when the chief engineer sprang up on deck with a radiant face.

"The journals have cooled off!" he cried. "We can go on again. Is it too late?" and he looked anxiously astern to see how close the Federal vessel had got.

"Too late!" roared Thayer, starting as if he had received an electric shock; "not by a big sight! Give her all the steam you can, right away!"

Back darted the engineer to his place, and in another minute the thrice welcome sound of the wheels once more smiting the water filled all hearts with joy.

Instantly Mr. Sinclair became transformed from the

personification of despair to a picture of hope and determination.

"We'll fool him yet! we'll fool him yet!" he cried, clapping his thin white hands together ecstatically, until Victor and Erebus, each seizing an arm, strove to express their joy by clasping it fervently.

As soon as the *Greyhound's* getting under way again was perceived on board the cruiser, a puff of smoke and a loud report showed that its significance was fully appreciated.

The shot was well aimed, but happily it fell short; for the *Oneida* lacked yet some hundreds of yards of being within range, and before that distance could be made up the blockade-runner was once more under full speed.

Away she raced, seeming to her relieved and rejoicing company to cut through the crisp white-caps faster than ever before; and the wind still being in her favour, the hopelessness of the chase became so evident that in the course of another hour the *Oneida* gave up pursuit, and steered sullenly westward, to hunt for some quarry less difficult of capture.

The *Greyhound* kept on without further trouble from the machinery, and ere night fell was safely moored in St. George's Harbour, the chief port of

the Bermudas, where several other blockade-runners were already at anchor.

Of course the first thing to be done was to get the latest news from Charleston, and without delay Mr. Sinclair ordered out one of the boats, and proceeded to pay a visit to the other vessels, Victor and Ernest accompanying him.

As it chanced, the very first steamer he boarded proved to be the famous blockade-runner the *R. E. Lee*, which had arrived from Charleston that very morning with a full load of cotton, after a most exciting trial of speed with a couple of cruisers that had pressed her hard.

Captain Wilkinson was delighted to see Mr. Sinclair, and relieved his mind by the information that Charleston was still holding out bravely, and was likely to do so for some time to come.

He also had much to tell about the blockaded port and the sea-going cruisers, so that Mr. Sinclair felt well repaid for having touched at the Bermudas, and no longer regretted the loss of time.

It was very pleasant meeting fellow-countrymen whose experiences had as much in common with his own, and the commander of the *Greyhound* decided to remain at St. George's for the balance of the week,

as the steamer required some repairs after the storm, and it would be well to have her machinery thoroughly examined, lest something might perhaps go wrong in the very crisis of the run into Charleston.

The boys heartily approved of the arrangement. St. George's was quite an interesting place ; the Southerners were in as high favour there as at Halifax, and they could easily find abundant amusement.

They visited the famous caves carved by the waves out of the white coral of which the islands are composed, and in one of them were delighted by seeing a number of tame fish, that would, in response to the whistle of their owner, swim up to the edge of the basin to be fed.

These fish were marvellous in colour and beauty of form, and Ernest wanted very much to get some of the same kind to bring back to Charleston with him ; but there seemed no way of managing it, so he had to reluctantly abandon the notion.

Another point of great interest was the British naval station at Ireland Island, where they saw the immense floating dock, capable of taking in the largest man-of-war, which had been with tremendous difficulty towed across the Atlantic not long before.

Then there was fine boat-sailing to be enjoyed in a kind of boat peculiar to the Bermudas—a long, light, narrow cedar craft with square stern and rounded bow, that, when duly ballasted, would carry a remarkable spread of sail, and bound over the waves at an inspiring rate of speed.

The boatmen were for the most part negroes, and great adepts at overcharging, always trying to make visitors pay double as much as residents.

Erebus soon found this out, and it made him so indignant that he had quite an exciting encounter with one of the grasping fellows.

The boys had invited him to accompany them for a sail one propitious morning, and when they were bargaining for the hire of a boat, he waxed wroth at the manifest imposition attempted, and advised the boys to go to another boatman.

His interposition aroused the ire of the other negro, who, turning upon him with an angry face, demanded contemptuously,—

“What you know about it, anyway? You just keep your mouf shut.”

This was too much for the quick-tempered Erebus. Grasping the boatman by the collar of his shirt, he shook him as a mastiff might a fox-terrier, exclaiming :

“What do I know about it? I know dat you’re a mean, rascally nigger, an’ you’re trying to cheat de young massas; but you ain’t a-goin’ to do it, dat’s what I know.”

The boys made no attempt to interfere. They knew Erebus would not hurt the boatman; and the latter certainly deserved a good shaking in view of his exorbitant charges.

Thoroughly scared by the giant’s handling, the boatman as soon as released backed off to some distance, shouting,—

“Ye called me a nigger, you did. I’ll hab de law on ye, dat I will!”

Not understanding his meaning, Erebus retorted with a snort of disdain,—

“Of course I called you a nigger, and a mighty poor nigger you are.”

Now it was just then that Erebus had made a mistake. He might have shaken the boatman until his teeth cracked, and even given him a clip or two with impunity; but by calling him a “nigger,” he had subjected himself to the penalties of the law in a way of which he had no suspicion.

In Bermuda then there were no “negroes.” The people were classed as “coloured” and “plain”—

that is, white—and a fine was imposed upon any one calling the coloured folk “negroes.”

That afternoon an impatient-looking black policeman served a summons upon Erebus to appear before the magistrate the next morning at ten o'clock; and on his presenting himself for trial, he was mulcted in the amount of one pound sterling and costs, half the fine going to the complainant to salve his injured dignity.

The whole thing was a jolly joke to the boys, who would have been willing to pay another pound for an equal amount of amusement.

By the end of the week everything was in readiness for another start, and a blockade-runner which had just come in having reported the coast clear of cruisers, Mr. Sinclair gave orders for steam to be raised, that he might make his way out through the tortuous channels into the open sea before dark.

As the *Greyhound* was warping out from the wharf at which she had been lying, her company were witnesses of a scene that afforded them a hearty laugh.

On board the *R. E. Lee* was a certain Virginian colonel making the trip for the sake of his health, broken by the hardships of service in the field.

He was a tall, handsome man, who believed in having a good time when he could.

That day he and the purser of the blockade-runner had been enjoying the hospitality of St. George's, so that when they returned to the boat-landing they were "several sheets in the wind."

Some friends had come down to see them off, and so it happened the colonel's boat was lying outside of another which contained a fat old washerwoman. The gallant Virginian paused to exchange farewell salutations with his friends, oblivious of the fact that he had one foot on the stern-sheets of his own boat and the other on that of the washerwoman, and his boatman being equally ignorant of the state of affairs, hoisted the jib.

There was a stiff breeze blowing, and, of course, the boat at once began to pay off, with the result that in a moment the colonel found himself enacting the part of the Colossus of Rhodes.

The purser promptly seized one of his legs, and the fat washerwoman, with no less presence of mind, laid hold of the other.

Both held on for dear life, while the spectators were breathless with laughter and full of wonder as to the issue.

But the colonel was equal to the emergency. Taking in the whole situation, he calmly pulled his watch from his pocket, and holding it high above his head with both hands, said as placidly as if he were exchanging the time of day,—

“I reckon you’d better both let go.”

Purser and washerwoman obeyed, and down he went with a soft splash behind the two boats.

The water being three fathoms deep, his efforts to save his watch failed of success; but he made light of his loss, saying he would get a better one when the Southern army took possession of New York.

Still laughing at this ludicrous incident, the people of the *Greyhound* bade good-bye to the Bermudas, and turned their faces towards Charleston.

Mr. Sinclair was now quite himself again. The rest at St. George’s had completed the cure begun at Halifax; and though he still was thinner and paler than before the fever attacked him, his spirit was as strong and dauntless as ever.

All were in fine fettle on the blockade-runner, and eagerly anticipating the return to Charleston. Maintaining an even speed of ten knots an hour, three days would suffice for the run across, and then there would be as a grand wind-up to the voyage, which

had been so strangely lengthened out and so full of thrilling incidents, the breathless dash through the inevitable cordon of cruisers.

The first day out from St. George's passed very pleasantly. Just sufficient breeze blew to bring white-caps on the water; masses of snow-white clouds filled the azure vault of heaven with their serried array; the sun shone with such strength that, although the autumn season was well advanced, there was no chill in the air; and, undisturbed by the intrusion of unwelcome cruisers, the blockade-runner's company could take their ease and enjoy the beauty of the scene.

As the cabin party were at dinner in the evening, they naturally fell to discussing the chances of making Charleston without being chased, and Mr. Sinclair's spirits rose so high that he seemed sanguine at such good fortune being vouchsafed them.

But Thayer shook his grizzled head doubtfully.

"There ain't much chance of that," he said. "For one thing, that miserable hound Fitch didn't hurry off to Boston or New York for nothin'. He's given notice of our being out, and there'll be more than one cruiser waitin' for us like a cat watchin' for a mouse."

"And what if there is?" spoke up Ernest. "We can run away from them just as we've done before, can't we?"

"To be sure, to be sure," answered the pilot, with a patronizing smile, "supposing there should be only one at a time. But how about having two of them after you at once?"

"O Thayer, you're a regular croaker!" said Mr. Sinclair, with a smile of protest; "you're always looking on the dark side of things. Something tells me that we're going to get to Charleston all right this time, and you needn't be trying to give us all the blues."

Thayer said no more, and the conversation changed; but they all were reminded of it when the following morning about ten o'clock the heavy spars of a man-of-war made their appearance to the westward, and they knew that they were in for another chase.

"The *Oneida* again, I suppose," said Victor, in a tone of utter disgust, after a long look through his telescope.

"I reckon you're about right," responded Thayer. "He's bound to have us yet."

"Well, he's not got us yet, and he isn't going to, anyway," cried Ernest indignantly, as though there

was something unwarrantable in the cruiser's persistence.

When the Federal ship was first sighted, the courses of the two vessels were such that they were approaching each other at an obtuse angle.

It was therefore necessary to at once change the direction of the *Greyhound*, so that the pursuer might be put full astern.

This meant going away from instead of approaching Charleston, but there was no help for it; and with her engines working up to their maximum and every stitch of canvas set, the blockade-runner tore through the water, steering a course that would take her to the Bahamas.

"We can run into Nassau for refuge if we can't shake him off any other way," said Mr. Sinclair. "It's dreadful being so delayed, but what else can we do?"

At the first the cruiser gained sufficiently to bring his hull into full view; but after that, owing to the change in her course giving her more benefit from the wind, the *Greyhound* held her own, and for some hours practically no difference could be discerned in the distance separating the two vessels.

"If the journals don't give us trouble again, he'll never catch up to us," said Mr. Sinclair cheerfully;

“and Macleod is taking extra care that they don’t get overheated.”

But he had not taken all the contingencies into account when speaking thus. The overheating of the journals was not the only danger the blockade-runner had to face. The possibility at which Thayer hinted the preceding night might any minute be realized; indeed it was now near at hand. Mid-day had just gone, and the *Greyhound* was still keeping comfortably ahead of her persistent pursuer, when Victor, who had been sweeping the whole horizon with his glass, suddenly exclaimed as he pointed over the port bow,—

“Hullo! isn’t that another cruiser coming up on us there?”

## CHAPTER XXII.

### CAPTURED AT LAST.

VICTOR'S words filled everybody with consternation. Another cruiser ! and coming up from the port side too, so that to escape from him the *Greyhound* must perforce turn towards the coast, and thus cross the bows of the *Oneida*, still hanging on astern.

"What can we do, Thayer ?" cried Mr. Sinclair, clasping his hands nervously together. "Do you see any way of escape ?"

The pilot shook his head silently. Their case seemed to them hopeless, and he was beginning to speculate upon his fate when he fell into the hands of the Federal authorities. The Sinclairs would lose their ship and perhaps their liberty for a little while, but he might have to forfeit his life. Because he hailed from New England, he would in all likelihood be adjudged a traitor to his country, and condemned to an ignominious death. Yet he was determined

not to flinch. Whatever befell him he would face it firmly.

"We'll keep on until we're fired into," said Mr. Sinclair resolutely.

"Don't let us surrender to the *Oneida*, anyway," urged Victor. "It would serve them right to fool them after all, they've been following us so obstinately."

Steering a course that would prolong the struggle to the utmost, the *Greyhound* rushed on gallantly through the waves, as if her situation were in nowise desperate; and it presently became clear that while, barring some strange mishaps to her pursuers, there could be no doubt as to her capture, it was quite uncertain which of the two cruisers would have the honour and advantage of hailing her first.

The race between them became so close that it even diverted those in the blockade-runner a little from their own trouble, and they watched its progress with growing excitement.

"I'm kind of thinkin' that other fellow may be the *Kearsage*," said Thayer, after carefully studying the second cruiser, "and I guess it'll be the first to ask us to heave to."

The pilot's surmise was doubly correct. It was

the *Kearsage*, and a few minutes after he spoke a puff of smoke leaped out from the cruiser's bow, and a shot from a rifled gun went bounding over the waves past the *Greyhound's* stern.

"It's no use," said Mr. Sinclair, in a tone of resignation. "He's got our range, and can smash us to pieces. Steer the steamer toward him, Thayer; we'll let him take us."

With heavy hearts they drew near the cruiser, and soon were within hailing distance.

Mr. Sinclair made no attempt at evasion or denial.

"This is the blockade-runner *Greyhound*, bound for Charleston," he said, "and we surrender to you."

"Lay to, then, and we'll send a boat to you," was the reply.

The *Greyhound's* paddle-wheels ceased to revolve, and with the promptness of good discipline the cruiser lowered a boat, which came dancing over the waves carrying a dozen officers and men.

In absolute silence the little company on the bridge awaited the approach of their captors. Their hearts were too full of bitterness and sorrow for speech. It was not until the boat got so near that the faces of her occupants could be distinguished that the silence was broken. Then Victor, giving a start and shudder

as though he had suddenly encountered a rattlesnake, cried out,—

“Oh, if that’s not Fitch!”

Sure enough, sitting on the stern-sheets of the boat, his thin sharp features expressing revengeful joy, while his black beady eyes were fastened exultantly upon the blockade-runner, was the arch-traitor. His time of triumph had come at last.

At Victor’s words Mr. Sinclair uttered a groan of profound regret.

“Oh, why didn’t I let the *Oneida* take us?” he exclaimed. “I never imagined that skunk would be on board this vessel.”

But it was too late now. Fitch, when he hurried away from Halifax, had proceeded to New York, and succeeded in getting a place on board the *Kearsage*, then just starting off on a cruise. Owing to his information an especially sharp look-out had been kept for the *Greyhound*, and her capture made him the hero of the moment.

Knowing his son’s temper, Mr. Sinclair said earnestly to Victor as the boat drew alongside,—

“Take no notice of Fitch. If you have another row with him, it will only make things the worse for us. We’ve got to mind ourselves now.”

"I'll try to, father," Victor answered, the tense look on his face showing how strong a curb he was putting upon himself; "but," he added, hissing the words through his half-clinched teeth, "I'd like to kill the miserable scoundrel."

Mr. Sinclair received the officer in command of the boarding party with grave courtesy.

"My ship is yours now," he said simply. "I trust you will accord to us such treatment as gentlemen expect from each other."

The officer bowed and smiled assent. He was vastly pleased at his vessel rather than the *Oneida* having made the capture, and was disposed to show every consideration to the unfortunate blockade-runner.

When Fitch stepped upon the *Greyhound's* deck, he looked about him with an expression of vindictive glee that made Victor's blood boil, and only a warning look from his father restrained him from breaking out into wild words of denunciation.

A sharp observer might have noticed, too, what a fierce light flashed in Erebus' dark eyes, and how his huge hands clinched themselves into fists, one blow from which would have put the object of his hatred out of the way of doing further mischief.

The Federal officer was a courteous young man,

who seemed anxious to perform his duty with as little unpleasantness as possible; and in the course of a few minutes it was arranged that, supported by a midshipman and ten of his own men, he should remain in charge of the *Greyhound* for the purpose of taking her up to New York.

Mr. Sinclair, on behalf of himself and his company, having given parole that no attempt at recapturing the vessel would be made, the officer considerably consented that no restraint of any kind should be put upon the prisoners, and that they should continue to navigate the steamer.

The *Kearsage* and *Oneida* hung about until everything had been settled satisfactorily, and then they went back to their stations; while the *Greyhound*, with a parting salute of her flags, turned her bow north-west, and set off to meet her fate in the prize-court.

To the ineffable disgust of the blockade-runners, Fitch remained on board. Whether his motive was to take a mean, malignant delight in gloating over the unhappy condition of those whom he had so basely betrayed, or whether he was anxious to secure his full reward for his services when the adjudication came to be made, could be only a matter of guess.

Perhaps both considerations influenced him. It certainly required no small hardihood for him to face the contempt and loathing that the people of the *Greyhound* took pains to express by every word and look that had reference to him.

The situation was indeed a strange one. The Federal officer, the midshipman, and Fitch, of course, shared in the accommodation of the cabin, and with the first two Mr. Sinclair and the boys soon established a friendly footing that was pleasant for them all. Conversation flowed freely between them—they relating the exciting experiences through which they had already passed, and the Northerners telling them much about the cruisers and their captures.

But there were members of the cabin party who did not share in this sociability. Thayer kept as silent as if he had been stricken dumb. Only when addressed point-blank would he open his mouth, and as soon as he had answered the question he would relapse into silence. His heart was heavy with foreboding, and he made no attempt to disguise his depression.

As for Fitch, although he strove hard to take part in the conversation, the utter ignoring of what he might say by all save the Federal officers rendered

his efforts vain, and for the most part he was fain to be as silent as Thayer.

Victor found some relief for his pent-up feelings by taking the first opportunity of explaining to the officer why Fitch was so detested by them, and it soothed him to find a sympathetic listener.

"I quite see how you look on it," he said, after Victor had finished his story. "It's too bad that we should have to make use of such people. But everything's fair in love and war, you know, and you've no call to crow over us in the matter. There's no lack of spies and traitors on both sides."

"I suppose so," answered Victor, with a deep sigh. "But it goes hard to see them succeed in so contemptible a business, doesn't it?"

"Yes, it does," responded the officer emphatically. "For my own part I'd rather have nothing to do with them at all, but just fight the thing out fair and square on land and sea. But we must obey orders, you know, and that fellow Fitch seems to have been particularly useful to our side in one way or another. I expect he'll make a good thing out of your capture. He's been a long time on the look-out for you."

Victor ground his teeth in futile fury. The idea of Fitch having his pockets filled at their expense

seemed the last drop in the cup of bitterness pressed to his lips.

But what could he do? His hands were powerless, and he must needs bottle up his wrath and strive to comfort himself with the hope of a reckoning some day.

As the afternoon waned the two cruisers had disappeared in the distance, and by nightfall the *Greyhound* seemed absolutely alone upon the waste of water. She was a good two days' run from New York, and while she was hastening thither, those on board her must needs make the best of their situation, however trying it might be.

Save for Fitch's hateful presence, they would have got on comfortably enough; but he cast a restraint upon them all, and both captors and captured looked forward impatiently to the end of the voyage.

Mr. Sinclair and the officer talked much together, and this left the young midshipman to the company of Victor and Ernest, who, finding him a frank, jolly sort of chap, opened their hearts freely to him.

A good many vessels were sighted during the day, to all of which the officer gave as wide a berth as possible; whereat the blockade-runners were considerably puzzled.

They did not see why he should be so anxious to avoid his own cruisers, or be afraid of running across Southern vessels, unless he imagined that one of the latter might attempt to recover possession of the *Greyhound*, and that was hardly feasible enough to be worth considering.

Yet the Federal officer had his reasons for pursuing this course of action, and they were very well founded too, as became manifest ere the close of the day in a manner entirely unlooked for on the part of the *Greyhound's* company.

The afternoon was pretty well advanced, when a steamer showed up on the starboard bow, and came so directly towards the *Greyhound* that the only way to have prevented meeting her was to turn about and hurry off in the opposite direction.

The commander of the prize crew for a few minutes seemed in doubt as to whether to do this or not, and consulted earnestly with the midshipman.

In the end he decided to keep in his course, and gave orders for the engines to be put at full speed ahead.

As the other steamer approached there was much speculation as to her character on board the *Greyhound*. To judge by appearances, she was a British

sloop-of-war, being barque-rigged and heavily sparred after the manner of vessels of that type. She was propelled by a screw, and came up at a rate of speed that the blockade-runner at her best could not surpass.

"What do you make of her, Thayer?" asked Mr. Sinclair of the pilot, as they stood together on the after-deck eagerly scrutinizing the new-comer. "She's very like some of the English ships we saw at Halifax and St. George's, but I can't understand what one of them would be doing in these waters."

"No more can I, sir," replied Thayer, his wrinkled brow betraying his perplexity; "and what's more, if she be a British ship, she would just go by us, unless she had something to ask of us. But to the best of my understanding, that steamer is going to hail us."

"Perhaps our Yankee officer won't stop for her," suggested Mr. Sinclair. "He's got the *Greyhound* under full speed now."

"He'll stop fast enough if the commander of that craft says so," replied Thayer, with one of his grimly significant smiles. "There'll be some heavy guns aboard there as sure as my name's Hank."

There was no mistaking the keen concern of the Federal officer. Indeed it was so manifest that, as Mr. Sinclair rightly enough surmised, he more than

suspected the true character of the stranger, and was profoundly perturbed at her rapid approach.

She was still about half a mile distant, when suddenly the officer gave orders that all the members of the *Greyhound's* company should go below deck.

In considerable surprise they obeyed the command, and were inclined to be indignant when they found cabin and forecastle doors closed tight upon them. Evidently their captor was anxious that they should neither see nor hear what was about to take place.

In his hurry, however, he overlooked one thing—to wit, that they could open the port-holes, and through them keep informed as to the course of events.

The other steamer swiftly drew close to the *Greyhound*, and when but fifty yards separated the two vessels, the hail rang out,—

“Steamer ahoy! What’s your name, and whither bound?”

In breathless suspense those in the cabin awaited the answer, which came after a moment’s hesitation, as though the officer on the bridge had paused to consider his words,—

“The blockade-runner *Greyhound*, bound for Charleston. What’s your ship?”

From the port-holes they could see a look of sur-

prise come over the countenance of the commander, and there was a suspicious tone in his voice as he responded,—

“Why, you’re away out of your course, aren’t you? This ship’s the *Florida*, and if we’ve not lost our bearings, you’re too far north altogether.”

At the mention of the name *Florida*, a thrill of astonishment went through the imprisoned blockade-runners. None of them had ever seen the famous Southern privateer, but her brilliant exploits were known to them all.

Ernest was the first to break the spell of silence. Scarce knowing what he did in his excitement, he thrust his head through the port-hole, and shouted with all his might,—

“Help! help! We’ve been captured by the Yankees, and they’re taking us to New York!”

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE DASH TO CHARLESTON.

EVERY word of Ernest's appeal reached the ears of the commander of the *Florida*, who was no other than the renowned Captain Maffitt. Instantly he understood the whole situation, and with a mocking bow to the officer in charge of the *Greyhound*, called across to him,—

“Your game's up, my friend. I'll trouble you to let us have that steamer back again.”

With joyous speed a boat was lowered, and as it ran alongside the blockade-runner, those in the cabin joined in a hearty cheer of gladness.

In another moment they were on deck again, wringing the hands and clapping the backs of their rescuers, and expressing in the strongest language they could command their gratitude for their timely rescue.

“God bless you, Captain Maffitt!” Mr. Sinclair exclaimed, while the tears glistened in his eyes; “you've

made a new man of me. I can never thank you adequately for this service."

"Oh, that's all right," replied the commander of the *Florida*, in his off-hand way. "I'm only too glad to be able to do you this good turn, especially," he added, with an exultant smile, "since it's so rough on these Yankees, who've been thinking they had such a good thing."

As soon as he had exchanged greetings with the Confederates, Victor hunted up Fitch. He found him on the bridge with the officer and the midshipman, looking the very picture of impotent fury and chagrin.

Shoving his hands into his pockets and sticking his cap on the back of his head, Victor planted himself before him, and drawled out in his most exasperating tone,—

"Sold again! sold again! And what do you think will be done to you now? Will you give us the pleasure of your company back to Charleston?"

At his first words a gleam of wolfish ferocity shone in Fitch's eyes, and he started forward as if he would strike his tormentor. But restraining himself by a great effort, he kept his place, and as Victor continued a sharp shudder went through his frame. The idea of returning to Charleston filled him with terror.

Before Victor could say anything further, his father called him to go with him on board the *Florida* at her commander's invitation, in which both boys were included.

In high spirits they went over the famous privateer, and were greatly impressed by the completeness of her appointments and by the remarkable luxury in which her officers and men lived.

The most costly and elegant china and plate were in use even in the forecastle, and at every turn there were tokens of unstinted profusion such as one would expect to find in a metropolitan mansion and not in a rebel cruiser.

But the explanation was simple enough. Among the *Florida's* recent prizes had been several big homeward-bound Indiamen, and from their rich outfits the Southerners had helped themselves liberally, so that they were taking their meals in services not to be surpassed for style at Delmonico's.

Mr. Sinclair and the boys spent a very pleasant hour on the privateer, remaining to dinner with Captain Maffitt; and by the time they took their leave, the detail of their future programme was fully settled.

Captain Maffitt would take the Federal officers and men on board his vessel.

"They may come in handy for exchange," he said.

But Fitch would remain as a prisoner on the *Greyhound*.

"He shall be handed over for trial as soon as we reach Charleston," said Mr. Sinclair. "He has played the part of spy and traitor, and it will be for the court to say what punishment he shall suffer for it."

This arrangement gave great satisfaction to the other members of the blockade-runner's company. They were quite ready, indeed, to constitute themselves into a court of judgment, and to pass sentence on the prisoner without loss of time; but since Mr. Sinclair would not hear of this, they were content to commit the matter into the hands of the proper authorities.

The night was just settling down when the two steamers parted company—the *Florida* wishing the *Greyhound* good luck in getting into Charleston, and the *Greyhound* heartily cheering her rescuer as she disappeared into the darkness.

On through the shrouding gloom the blockade-runner sped jubilantly, neither Thayer nor Mr. Sinclair leaving the bridge at all, while Victor and Ernest remained up there with them until well past midnight.

All four were feeling in the best of humour. Even Thayer seemed convinced that their good fortune was

invincible, and that they were certain to reach Charleston in spite of their many set-backs.

"We've been havin' a kind of up-and-down time of it," he remarked to Mr. Sinclair. "But I guess we're goin' to make it out in our own way in the end. The moon's suitin' just right again, and, barring accidents, we oughtn't to slip up on gettin' into Charleston."

"That's the way it seems to me, Thayer," responded Mr. Sinclair. "We've got out of so many tight places in this trip, that I feel confident of our finishing up all right; and I assure you I'll be right glad to get to Charleston and to have a bit of a rest, for I'm quite free to confess that I've had all the excitement and worry I want for a while."

This was the general feeling upon the *Greyhound*. Officers and men alike were eager to have a holiday from the stress and strain they had been under for so many weeks, and they would all be ready to shout, "Hip, hip, hurrah!" when they were once more safe under the protection of Fort Sumter.

If not driven out of their course by cruisers, they were due to make Charleston by nightfall of the next day; which would suit them admirably, as they could then run the blockade at once without having to hang about waiting for an opportunity.

Fitch, carefully handcuffed, was confined in the second mate's cabin, where he maintained a sullen silence, although Mr. Sinclair tried to draw him into conversation, being curious to learn how he had saved his life the time he fell overboard in fleeing from Erebus.

But not a word would he utter even in response to Victor's most aggravating taunts, and the truth was never ascertained.

He evidently feared the worst for himself, as well he might. He had small chance of mercy at the hands of the Charleston authorities. They had already suffered too severely through scoundrels of like character to leave him in any doubt as to his doom.

Throughout the next day the seas were continually swept by glasses anxiously hunting for suspicious-looking steamers, in the hands of the quartette on the bridge.

The weather, fortunately, was greatly in the *Greyhound's* favour—the sky being overhung with heavy clouds that gave a leaden hue to the waves, in the midst of which she would have been altogether invisible at the distance of a mile; and to this, no doubt, she more than once owed immunity from danger, for

several unmistakable cruisers were sighted. But none of them discovered the blockade-runner, and she was enabled to keep right on her course hour after hour throughout the day.

The rain, which had been threatening for some time, began to fall late in the afternoon, much to Thayer's approval.

"The thicker the weather, the better for us," he said, with a smile of satisfaction. "So long as it doesn't come up foggy, anyway, and even then I reckon I could feel my way in somehow."

"You're quite welcome to try it at all events," said Mr. Sinclair. "We might just as well take our chances of running aground as go dodging about off Charleston with the cruisers as thick as mosquitoes."

Excitement ran high on board the blockade-runner as she drew in towards the mainland. Protected by "sou'-westers" and oilskins, the quartette on the bridge took no thought of the rain. Their whole attention was concentrated upon looking for the cruisers, into whose company they were rapidly making their way.

Mr. Sinclair having satisfied himself that everything was all right in the engine-room, and that the steamer was trimmed so as to get the utmost speed out of her, let it be understood that this time the

*Greyhound* was not to stop until she was stranded or sunk ; and as provision against the latter emergency, the boats and lifebuoys were got in readiness for prompt use.

The blockade-runner's company were thus disposed : Mr. Sinclair and Thayer stood beside the wheel on the bridge, ready to make the steamer turn in her own length if need be ; Victor and Ernest took their position on the paddle-boxes, one at either side, for Mr. Sinclair felt sure there were no sharper eyes than theirs on board ; Erebus was posted at the bow, whence he could give warning if they were running into danger ; while up in the crow's-nest the first mate kept a keen look-out.

The state of the weather was all in the *Greyhound's* favour—the splashing of the rain completely muffling the sound of her paddle-wheels at a short distance, and such wind as there was blowing off shore.

Keeping steadily on at three-quarters speed, the gallant little steamer soon after nightfall reached the outer edge of the region patrolled by the cruisers.

Then she paused for a few minutes, in order that Thayer might assure himself of her precise position.

Not a cruiser was to be made out in the gloom ahead ; at which the pilot expressed his surprise.

"There ought to be a steamer or two out here," he said, with a puzzled look. "We're not more than ten miles from Charleston. I wonder where they're all gone to?"

The words had hardly left his lips before the sound of heavy firing came from inshore, boom following boom in quick succession.

"Hullo!" exclaimed Mr. Sinclair; "what does that mean? Surely they can't be fighting the forts at this hour!"

Thayer listened for a few moments in silence, cocking his ear towards the sound like a hunting-dog.

"There's no firing back, ye notice," he responded. "It is not the forts they're firin' at, but some other unlucky blockade-runner, I'll bet my boots."

Mr. Sinclair's countenance fell, and he could not suppress a shudder of apprehension. That merciless cannonading had an ominous sound in his ears.

"I expect you're right, Thayer," he said gravely, "and that's what we've got to run the gauntlet of."

The pilot nodded, and gave his quid a turn in his cheek. He was quite ready for the ordeal, however trying it might prove to heart and nerve.

"Had we better wait until the firing's over?" asked Mr. Sinclair anxiously

"Keep right on, sir," was the pilot's reply. "The cruisers'll be so taken up with the other vessel we may get by them without being seen."

"All right then, we'll try it," returned Mr. Sinclair, and he called down the tube to the engineer to put on full speed.

Presently they could make out a cruiser ahead of them that was evidently hurrying in to help her consorts in the job they had in hand.

"I have it!" cried Thayer, as soon as the big black hull was discovered. "We will follow her in, and she'll show us the way."

It was a daring device, but they were in the mood for such things; so keeping close astern of the Federal vessel, they steamed along in her wake for several miles, being, of course, quite invisible to the Northerners, who, if they had only known it, might have taken a prize by simply turning around.

The cruiser was continually making signals by rapidly flashing differently coloured lights, the meaning of which Mr. Sinclair and Thayer tried hard to decipher, as the knowledge might be useful at some future time; but do their very best, they could not make head or tail of them.

Neither were they able to discern through the

darkness the vessels to which these signals were made, although they could not have been far ahead of the cruiser.

Suddenly the firing ceased. "They've got her, or she's got away," said Thayer, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"And it will be our turn next," added Mr. Sinclair, with an anxious sigh.

A few moments after the last boom of the cannon inshore, the cruiser, whose lead the *Greyhound* had been following, turned out to sea again, and only by a dexterous dodge to starboard did the latter escape being come upon.

Victor and Ernest were greatly alarmed, being convinced that their presence had been discovered, and sprang in from their posts in the paddle-boxes in considerable trepidation.

But Mr. Sinclair reassured them, and the cruiser was soon swallowed up in the darkness, without any one on board her having suspected for a moment how near at hand a blockade-runner had been for more than an hour.

The *Greyhound's* engines were now slowed down to less than half-speed, and she crept on with the utmost care.

Owing to information received at Bermuda to the effect that the Federal forces had by the aid of their monitors succeeded in driving the Confederates from Morris Island, whose batteries had hitherto protected the southern entrance to the harbour, Thayer's plan was to run in by the Beach Channel at the north, where Forts Marshall, Beauregard, and Moultrie, on Sullivan's Island, still compelled the cruisers to keep a respectful distance.

He was not at all familiar with this channel, and although he said nothing about it, he felt extremely anxious as to being able to navigate it safely. Yet there was no alternative, and, hoping for the best, he pushed ahead.

Shortly after midnight the rain ceased, and the air cleared, making it possible to see twice as far as they had been able to do hitherto.

Not until then did those on board the *Greyhound* realize how critical was their position. The blockade-runner stood quite close inshore—so close, indeed, that Mr. Sinclair was in great dread of stranding; while not more than a mile to seaward lay the cruisers, in a long, irregular line; and between this array of vigilant, hostile ships and the dangerous beach the little steamer had to make her way to safety!

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### A CLOSE SHAVE.

THE speed of the *Greyhound* was reduced to little more than a crawl, and on either side the bow a leadsman was posted who kept his lead going without pause, the soundings being passed along the deck in a whisper by sailors a few feet apart.

To run aground there would inevitably be to become a target for the cruisers, who would pound the steamer to pieces with their heavy guns, even though they could not venture in to capture her because of the forts that fronted Sullivan's Island.

Presently some faint lights began to show themselves on the starboard bow, the sight of which Thayer hailed with manifest relief.

"Those are for us," he said, pointing them out to Mr. Sinclair; "they're showing them from Fort Moultrie. As soon as I get the range right we'll go ahead faster."

“Thank Heaven !” exclaimed Mr. Sinclair fervently. “This suspense is almost too much for me.”

It was indeed a severe test for the nerves of the blockade-runners to have to creep along so slowly, when at any moment the soaring rush of a rocket or the boom of a cannon might betoken that their presence had been detected.

The boys had left the paddle-boxes, and were standing by Mr. Sinclair on the bridge—Victor as thoroughly master of himself as ever, and Ernest fidgeting about in a restless way characteristic of him when under strong excitement. In the waist of the ship was Erebus, ready to render any service within the range of human strength to those whom he loved better than his own life.

With bated breath all waited for Thayer to make sure of his course by means of the friendly lights gleaming all too faintly inshore.

“Ah !” he grunted at last in a relieved way, “I’ve got it now ; we can go a good bit faster, sir.”

The order was given for more steam, and the *Greyhound* began to move more rapidly ahead. For half a mile or so she ran along smoothly, the leads being kept going steadily ; and the occupants of the bridge were already looking eagerly for the lights of Fort

Sumter, when, with a startling, sickening shock, the vessel's bow struck hard upon the sandbank forming the southern side of the Beach Channel.

A simultaneous groan of horror went up from the steamer's company at this appalling mishap. To be stranded on the beach would have been bad enough, but to go aground on the outer bank, and thus be exposed to the full fire of the blockading fleet, was infinitely worse.

For a minute all was confusion and panic on the steamer, and Mr. Sinclair even ordered out the boats, giving every one on board the option of leaving the vessel.

At first it seemed as if the crew would take advantage of his permission to flee; but Thayer, looking grimmer and more resolute than ever, sprang down among them, and said in his deep rough voice,—

“Surely, mates, you're not goin' to let the Yankees have our ship without trying to save her. The tide's on the rise, and she'll soon be afloat again. Let us stand by her a little longer. They won't fire at us when we are in the boats.”

His manly appeal, which Mr. Sinclair supported with an emphatic “Hear! hear!” and the boys with

a half-suppressed "Hurrah for old Thayer!" wrought an instant change in the minds of the men.

"Right you are," responded the mate. "We needn't take the boats until we've got to.—What say you, my hearties?"

The men murmured their assent, and the panic passed away completely.

It was still an hour to daylight, and the *Greyhound* was comparatively safe from discovery until the darkness of night had passed.

In the meantime every effort was made to get her afloat again, but without avail. She had grounded at low tide, and not until there was a considerable rise of the waters could she possibly get off.

The advent of dawn revealed to the blockade-runners the supremely critical character of their situation.

The *Greyhound* had stranded about a mile from Sullivan's Island, and the same distance to seaward lay two big cruisers, whose look-outs were not slow to discover the unhappy position of the Southern steamer.

"They're going to fire on us," cried Ernest, in a tone of mingled surprise and indignation. "Why, I call that cowardly."

But whatever he might think of it, the commanders

of the cruisers were troubled with no compunctions ; for the harsh roar of Parrot guns was heard, and big shot splashed into the water uncomfortably close to the *Greyhound*.

But the cruisers were not to have it all their own way. The garrisons of Forts Beauregard and Moultrie were no less alive to the state of affairs, and without delay their heavy artillery got to work, sending well-aimed missiles clear over the blockade-runner, and so close to the cruisers that they were both fain to move farther out, and thus lose their range upon the *Greyhound*.

Encouraged by this and by the rising tide, those on board the latter renewed their efforts to free their vessel, and at last, by all hands running from bow to stern simultaneously, she slipped off into deep water amid a frantic chorus of cheers from her relieved and rejoicing company.

But the little steamer's ordeal was not yet over. To get into the Beach Channel in the then state of the tide, it was absolutely necessary to make a detour in the direction of the blockading fleet for some distance before turning to enter.

This was a ticklish manœuvre, and the lines on Thayer's face grew very hard drawn as he pointed

the *Greyhound's* bow almost straight towards her eager enemies.

"We've got to give them the best chance to knock us to pieces they've had yet," he said through his clinched teeth ; "but I reckon ye're willin' to try it."

"Indeed I am," replied Mr. Sinclair resolutely. "It's neck or nothing now."

The scene that ensued was one of the most remarkable and thrilling in the whole history of blockade-running. Determined to destroy the *Greyhound*, since they could not capture her, every cruiser within range opened fire upon the devoted vessel, while the batteries on Sullivan's Island took her part by hurling their heaviest shot and shell at the hostile ships.

Thus there was a magnificent artillery duel, and right in the midst of it the daring little steamer, with her engines working up within an ace of bursting-point, dashed through the water, into which the iron missiles were falling all about her like Brobdingnagian hail.

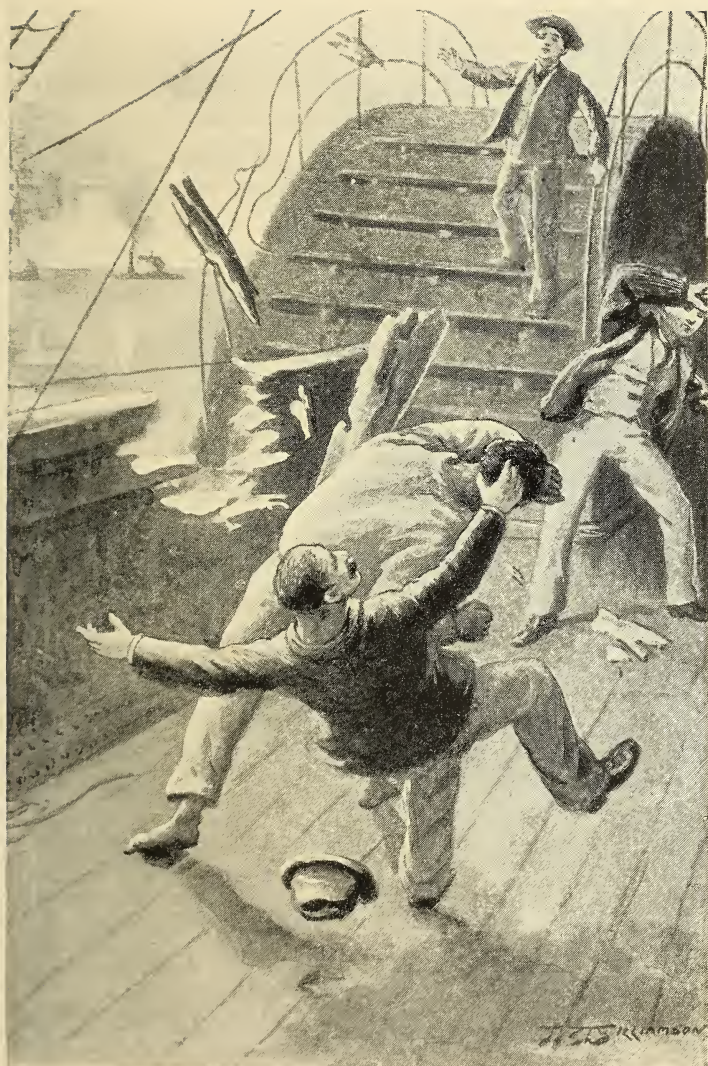
Mr. Sinclair with Victor and Ernest kept their places on the bridge. They were in no greater danger there than anywhere else ; and even though they would have been better protected below decks, they could not have been content to stay there.

Considering the number of cruisers that were firing away furiously at the *Greyhound*, it was wellnigh miraculous how few of their shots told.

Both masts were soon snapped off short, and the funnel was pierced in two places, while a heavy shell smashed in the bulwarks on the port side, fortunately without exploding.

Yet it seemed as if only the vessel itself was to suffer, until just as Mr. Sinclair was returning from the engine-room, whither he had gone for a look at the machinery upon which so much depended, a solid shot crashed through the starboard side only a few yards from him.

So suddenly did it all take place that no one knew precisely what had occurred. But it would seem that Erebus, who was standing near Mr. Sinclair, the instant the cannon-ball struck the steamer's side sprang in front of his employer, crying, "For any sake, massa, look out!" And the words had not left his lips before a great splinter of wood torn from the bulwarks, and which but for his acting as a shield would have infallibly decapitated Mr. Sinclair, struck him full on the shoulder, hurling him forward so that he involved Mr. Sinclair in his downfall.



*"A great splinter of wood torn from the bulwarks struck him full  
on the shoulder."*



With cries of alarm the boys leaped down from the bridge, and members of the crew rushed forward to lift the prostrate men.

Mr. Sinclair was somewhat stunned by the blow to the back of his head, but was otherwise uninjured.

Poor Erebus, however, had saved his beloved employer at sore cost to himself. The splinter had torn him terribly on the neck and shoulders. Indeed it seemed at first as if his injuries must prove fatal.

Forgetting all else in their anxiety for the noble fellow, Mr. Sinclair and the boys addressed themselves to the tasks of stanching the blood and binding up the gaping wounds, showering upon the sufferer warm words of gratitude as they did so.

He was quite conscious, and never winced or murmured as they did what they could for him.

"Never mind, massa," he said protestingly; "don't take so much trubble for dis poor nigger, he ain't worth it."

"Indeed you are, Rebus," responded Mr. Sinclair warmly. "You saved my life, and I'm going to do all I can to save yours."

While they were thus engaged the *Greyhound* rushed on, no more shot finding their way into her hull; and just as they had Erebus fixed up to the best

of their ability, a joyous shout from Thayer told them that all danger was past, and that they were safe within Charleston Harbour.

Early as the hour was the heavy firing had attracted the attention of the garrisons of the forts, and as the gallant little steamer sped past old Sumter its walls were lined with men, who sent cheer upon cheer after her, while the Confederate flag flaunted proudly from the highest staff.

It was the same at Fort Ripley and at Castle Pinckney; and by the time the *Greyhound* reached the wharf of John Sinclair's Sons, it was alive with a throng of shouting people, eager to welcome the daring blockade-runners.

It really seemed as if all the city went into rejoicing over the *Greyhound's* fortunate escape; and as the story of her many vicissitudes passed from lip to lip, those who had shared in them found themselves the heroes of the day.

The reunion of Mr. Sinclair and the boys with the members of their families was an affair of fervent embraces, and joyous laughter, and happy tears, and multiplying exclamations, and questions quite too bewildering to describe.

In spite of undoubted privations all had gone well

with the two families, and they soon forgot their many days of wearing anxiety in the compensating delight of the home-coming.

Colonel Sinclair was again at home, this time for good, as his right arm had been so disabled by a rifle bullet that he was altogether unfitted for further service.

As soon as the first glad confusion was over, Mr. Sinclair bethought himself of Erebus; and a skilful surgeon was at once despatched to take his case in hand, and to have him removed with as little delay as possible to Mr. Sinclair's house, where he would receive the same care as if he were one of his own sons.

This having been carefully done, and the surgeon having given the comforting assurance that the heroic fellow's injuries would not prove fatal, serious though they were, Mr. Sinclair felt free to give his attention to other matters. Not until then did it occur to him that he had a prisoner on board his vessel. In fact it was Victor who reminded him, remarking in his quiet way in the course of the morning,—

“What's to be done with Fitch, father?”

Mr. Sinclair started, and a frown gathered on his brow. In the midst of so much happiness the question came like an unwelcome intruder.

“Confound the fellow!” he exclaimed, in a tone of vexation; “I wish I had let him go with the others to the *Florida*.”

The truth of the matter was Mr. Sinclair had a tender heart, and shamefully as Fitch had acted towards him, and richly as the rascal merited a traitor’s doom, he shrank from committing him to it.

After a moment’s silence he added, “He can stay where he is until the morning, and then I’ll turn him over to those whose business it will be to see that he gets what he deserves;” and with this he dismissed the subject.

When the blockade-runners had time to look about Charleston, they were sorry to find that the condition of the city had got manifestly worse during their long absence.

By land and sea the Northern forces had been drawing continually closer, driving the Confederates, in spite of their almost superhuman courage and endurance, from one point of defence after another, until now nearly all the outlying batteries had been captured or silenced, and they had their guns placed within a few miles of the city. Stern old Fort Sumter, although still garrisoned, had been wellnigh hammered into ruins, and had hardly an efficient gun left. Fort

Wagner, together with the other batteries on the Western Beach, after one of the most gallant defences on record, had succumbed to the pitiless assault of the monitors' great rifled cannons; and altogether the state of affairs was rapidly becoming desperate.

Many of the inhabitants had left the city, going out into the country beyond the reach of shot and shell. Good food was almost impossible to secure, except at prices that were simply appalling. In fact it was hard times all around, and not much hope of improvement, but rather of still further demoralization.

The cargo of the *Greyhound*, even though Mr. Sinclair nobly forbore to demand such prices for his goods as he might have exacted, yielded so enormous a profit that he decided to be content therewith, and to run the blockade no more. Moreover, the ability of the beleaguered city to hold out against its assailants indefinitely seemed quite uncertain, and he resolved to remain until its fate should be settled.

The morning after the *Greyhound's* arrival, as he was sitting down to breakfast with his family, Victor, who had been up and out at an early hour, burst into the room in a high state of excitement.

"He's gone, father; he's got away!" he panted out breathlessly.

"Who's gone?" asked Mr. Sinclair, with a look of surprise and concern.

"Why, Fitch," answered Victor. "He escaped last night somehow. There's not a sign of him anywhere."

Mr. Sinclair laughed in a relieved way. "Let him go then," he said; "it's a good riddance of bad rubbish. God grant I may never see his sneaking face again."

"But, father," protested Victor with an unmistakable pout, for he did not at all approve of his dismissing the matter so lightly, "he should have been well punished, you know. He is a miserable scoundrel."

"You're right enough, my son," returned Mr. Sinclair, with a conciliatory smile. "He'll get his punishment all in good time. But he did us no real harm after all, and I'm just as glad that we've not got to be his prosecutors. He's positively done me a good turn by escaping. How do you think he managed it?"

"Oh, they all say they don't know anything about it," answered Victor, in a tone of disgust; "but somebody must have helped him and got well paid for doing it."

The truth of the matter was never ascertained, but Victor's surmise was no doubt correct. Anyway, Fitch vanished entirely out of the Sinclairs' life, save

that his name continued to be with them a synonym for what was most despicable in human conduct.

As the days went by it became increasingly clear to both Captain and Colonel Sinclair that the case of Charleston was hopeless. Not only did the besiegers by land and sea achieve steady gains, but reports, ever growing more full and precise, of General Sherman's advance, carrying everything before him, made manifest as never before the inherent weakness of the Confederate cause in spite of the heroism with which it was being maintained against such tremendous odds.

By the close of the year 1864 it was apparent that, unless relief came from some unexpected quarter, the surrender of Charleston could not be long delayed.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### FOR THE LAST TIME.

THE New Year brought no gladness or hope to the beleaguered city; on the contrary, the dark shadow of despair only deepened over the bravest hearts in the Southern capital.

So numerous were the cruisers lying outside the harbour, and so vigilant the watch they maintained, that blockade-running had been almost brought to an end.

Owing to the withdrawal of the Confederate forces from Morris Island, the Beach Channel alone remained for the use of the blockade-runners, and the number of blackened skeletons of what had once been fine fleet steamships which sprawled on the shores of Sullivan's Island told a harrowing tale of failure to get safely into port.

Cooped up in the city, and exposed to constant

danger from the shot and shell which the nearness of the Federal batteries now enabled them to hurl right into the midst of the houses, the situation of the inhabitants was rapidly becoming intolerable, and the most desperate enterprises were projected in the hope of raising the siege or breaking the blockade.

In one of these both Victor and Ernest were intensely anxious to have a share, and only by taking them into his confidence as to what he had in mind himself did Captain Sinclair succeed in diverting them from it.

Yet, perhaps, in the whole course of the war, nothing demanding more reckless daring was attempted on either side.

At one of the wharves lay a curious-looking craft with a very strange history. Built in Mobile, the year before she had been brought to Charleston for the purpose of destroying the blockading fleet.

She was a screw-steamer of some sixty feet in length, built in the shape of a cigar, and capable of being completely submerged, leaving merely a small portion of the funnel showing above water.

From her bow projected a long iron outrigger, at the end of which was fixed a torpedo that would explode on coming into contact with a vessel, blowing

a hole in her side that must infallibly send her to the bottom.

At each end of this extraordinary structure was a small hatch just large enough for one man to pass through, and when the crew were on board, these hatches were closed so as to be water-tight.

By letting in water the torpedo-boat was then sunk some six inches below the surface, and as her smoke and steam were got rid of below the water, she was practically invisible, even in broad daylight.

Although great things were expected of the remarkable contrivance, her previous history was by no means reassuring. While on her trial trip at Mobile, she had suddenly sunk with a crew of ten men, all of whom were suffocated. Soon after coming to Charleston, she had been swamped by the wash of a passing steamer, and only the officer in command escaped. Three times more in practice she went down with loss of life.

Yet, in spite of the fact that she had been the coffin of over thirty men, without striking a blow at the enemy, there was no lack of eager volunteers for the desperate enterprise of going out in her to blow up the nearest Federal ship.

Victor and Ernest were full of the idea of going,

and the commander of the torpedo-boat was quite willing that they should accompany him.

But neither Captain nor Colonel Sinclair could be brought to give their consent. They were in hearty sympathy with the gallant undertaking, but they entertained small hopes of its having a successful issue. Moreover, they had their own plans so near completion that they did not want their boys to be otherwise occupied, lest delay should be caused at a critical moment.

Well indeed was it for Victor and Ernest that they did not have their own way. Setting forth one dark night early in the year, the cigar-shaped torpedo-boat, with seven men on board, stole down upon the Federal fleet, and exploded her torpedo under the *Housatonic*.

The blow was a deadly one. The cruiser sank immediately, carrying down many of her crew. But she did not go unavenged, for her destroyer never came to the surface again; and after the war, when Charleston Harbour was being cleared of the wrecks that had accumulated during the siege, the torpedo-boat was found close by her victim, with all her men at their stations.

From the beginning of the year it had been growing clearer to the Sinclairs that there was no hope for

Charleston, and as quietly as possible they made preparations for getting away before the Federal forces should take possession of the city.

They had kept their intentions secret, even from the boys; because they knew that if they became public, they would be overwhelmed with applications to be allowed to join in their enterprise, and they felt that they must confine it to their own people. The *Greyhound's* accommodations were limited at best, and as it was the two families would crowd the little steamer to the utmost.

Not until the Confederate authorities had decided that the evacuation of the city was inevitable did the brothers let their plans be known, and then the final preparations for the start were hurried on strenuously.

The blockade-runner's hold had been packed tight with bales of the finest cotton; but no deck-load was taken, for Captain Sinclair wished to have the utmost freedom in working his vessel.

By great good fortune sufficient coal of good quality for six days' steaming had been procured, and there was no ground for any uneasiness of mind on that score.

It was the middle of the month of February when

everything was ready, and with many sighs of regret at leaving their dearly-loved homes, and many prayers for a safe termination to their venture, the members of the two families, husbands and wives and boys and girls, with a few servants, including of course Erebus, went on board the *Greyhound*.

Once more the stanch little steamer was to brave the perils of the blockade, and this time with such a precious freight of humanity as she had never carried before.

"Now, Thayer," said Captain Sinclair solemnly, as the wharf lines were cast off and the *Greyhound* began to move down stream, "you must outdo yourself this trip. If you take us through safely, I'll make you rich enough to do nothing for the rest of your life."

The pilot smiled significantly, and gave the wheel a twist before replying.

"I'm not so much set on getting rich," he said, "as I am on giving the Yankees the slip again. They'd be everlastingly tickled to nab us this run in particular, and it'll be all the more solid satisfaction to fool them."

The bridge had five occupants now, Colonel Sinclair having joined his brother there, although of course he

did not intend to have anything to say in the working of the ship.

Dropping down as far as Fort Sumter, the blockade-runner waited on the landward side of that sorely-battered citadel until nightfall. The tide would be high on the bar by eight o'clock, and that was the hour appointed for the dash out to sea.

In obedience to Captain Sinclair's injunction, all the members of both families, save Victor and Ernest, remained in the cabin. They would only be in the way on deck, and furthermore there was no small risk in staying up if the cruisers should open fire.

Thayer grunted approval when he found considerable swell running outside the bar.

"I like that," he said. "If they do sight us and blaze away, we'll be all the harder to hit when we're bobbin' up and down in this style."

The words had but left his lips when a smothered exclamation from Victor, who had been peering anxiously over the port paddle-box, called the attention of the officers to a gunboat posted unusually close to the bar which they had almost run into in the darkness, for it carried no lights.

Shutting his teeth on a shout of surprise, Thayer flung himself upon the wheel, making the *Greyhound*

swerve suddenly away from the course he had been steering.

But the Federal look-out had already detected the blockade-runner's presence, and the sharp summons of, "Lay to, there, or we'll fire into you," came from the gunboat's commander.

Although the cruiser was not more than fifty yards distant, and those on the *Greyhound* knew right well that the Northern officer was not speaking empty words, the little steamer rushed ahead without vouchsafing any response.

The next moment a tremendous explosion split the night air. The cruiser had fired his whole broadside at the flying vessel.

Then was the advantage of the heavy swell made manifest; for by a happy chance the blockade-runner was in the hollow of the wave when the broadside reached her, and every shot passed harmlessly over her, save one that went through the funnel.

Not content with hurling such a storm of deadly missiles, the gunboat followed it with a heavy fire of musketry, besides sending up rockets to notify her consorts, two of which promptly came down upon the *Greyhound*.

Yet again fortune favoured the blockade-runner:

for the two new-comers, making a bad guess at her position, closed with her on her quarter instead of the bow; and although they too opened fire, none of their shots told, while, as the *Greyhound* was now going at her utmost speed, they were soon reduced to shadowy forms struggling along astern without a chance of catching up.

It was still too soon, however, for the group on her bridge to shout "Hurrah!" for the signalling and firing had aroused others of the blockading squadron that were further out, and they hastened to the scene of action.

Colonel Sinclair had hitherto maintained a most commendable composure, seeing that it was his first experience of blockade-running, but now his apprehension broke through his self-command.

"O horror!" his eyes bulging from their sockets as he glanced to right and left, "look *there*, and *there*! What's to become of us now?"

He might well be startled, for the situation of the *Greyhound* had suddenly become critical in the extreme.

On either side of the brave little steamer, and not more than a pistol-shot distant, there loomed up in the semi-darkness the shape of a big cruiser.

So close were they that they seemed to fear of hitting each other, as had already happened more than once when blockade-runners were being chased.

"We'd better stop, Thayer," said Captain Sinclair, in a tone of sorrowful distress. "If they fire they'll blow us out of the water."

Thayer's rugged features wore a look of fierce determination that he had never shown before.

"Give me five minutes more, sir," he demanded hoarsely.

"Very well, then," assented Captain Sinclair. "God grant they do not hit us."

These two cruisers, like the previous one, had come up on the *Greyhound's* quarter, and were both inferior to her in speed. The pilot had observed this, and founded upon it a hope of escape.

Had the night been calm and the water smooth, the blockade-runner must infallibly have been riddled by the guns of the cruiser; but happily there was a stiff breeze blowing, and this, combined with the pitching and tossing caused by the swell that was running, made it exceedingly difficult for the Northern gunners to get any sort of aim.

So soon as they deemed it safe they opened fire upon the fleeing vessel, and the little party on her

bridge could not help ducking their heads as they heard the heavy shot go whistling above them.

"We're running a fearful risk, Thayer," said Captain Sinclair anxiously, "but you can have ten minutes instead of five."

Thayer gave a snort of satisfaction.

"I reckon I can do with that," he responded. "See how we're leaving them!"

By a common impulse the two men and their sons broke into a shout of joy. The gallant little *Greyhound* was indeed distancing her pursuers, who were already so far behind that only their bow-chasers could be brought to bear upon her, and these were so badly aimed that the shot went harmlessly on either side.

By the end of the ten minutes there was not a cruiser in sight, and the passage of the blockading fleet had been effected without serious hurt to the steamer or injury to any of her company.

When it had become clear beyond question that for the present at least all danger from the cruisers was past, those who had been waiting so anxiously in the cabin for the issue of the adventure were invited on deck, and the whole party gave themselves up to rejoicing.

Old Thayer was the subject of such a shower of congratulation and grateful praise that he was fairly overwhelmed, and asking Captain Sinclair to take the wheel for a few minutes, beat a retreat to his own cabin in manifest confusion.

Colonel Sinclair felt bound to apologize for the agitation he had been betrayed into.

"I've been in some pretty tight places on the field," he said, "but I frankly confess I never felt more scared in my life than when I first caught sight of these two great ships coming right at us, one on each side."

There was little sleep for anybody on board the *Greyhound* that night. Even the children could hardly be persuaded to close their eyes, and as a natural consequence the next day dawned upon a very tired lot of people.

But what did it matter? The horizon was clear of cruisers, and the *Greyhound* could speed gaily on without check towards her haven at the Bermudas.

In due time, and without further incident of note, St. George's was safely reached, and the career of the doughty little steamer as a blockade-runner came to a successful ending.

Soon after her arrival at the Bermudan capital, the

news came of the surrender of Charleston. This Federal gain convinced the Sinclair brothers of the hopelessness of the Southern cause, and they decided to remain where they were until the end of the hard-fought struggle should come.

Thanks to the success of their blockade-running ventures, they were still wealthy men, and had no cause for anxiety on that score.

As soon as possible after the conclusion of the war they returned to Charleston, and thenceforth did their part in the building up of that new South which in the course of years arose from the ashes of the old.

Victor and Ernest grew up to realize their ambition to be successful merchants, and the traditions of the firm of John Sinclair's Sons were worthily upheld by them when they succeeded to their fathers' place.

Erebus, steadily refusing to avail himself of his freedom, remained as a faithful and privileged member of Captain Sinclair's household.

Hank Thayer, the richer by twoscore thousand dollars for his brilliant services, gave up the sea for good, and settled down to a life of dignified ease and leisure in a New England seaport.

As for the *Greyhound*, although her owners had many tempting offers for her, they refused on any

consideration to part with a vessel which had served them so well, and she continued to be a prized possession of the firm long after the exciting days when she so cleverly baffled the blockaders had become matter of history.

THE END.



# Our Boys' Select Library.

Stories of Adventure, Travel, and Discovery.

---

*Post 8vo, cloth extra, uniform binding. Price 2s. 6d. each.*

---

**Beyond the Himalayas.** A Book for Boys. By JOHN GEDDIE, F.R.G.S., Author of "The Lake Regions of Central Africa," etc. With 9 Engravings.

**The Castaways.** A Story of Adventure in the Wilds of Borneo. By Captain MAYNE REID.

**Frank Redcliffe.** A Story of Travel and Adventure in the Forests of Venezuela. A Book for Boys. By ACHILLES DAUNT, Author of "The Three Trappers," etc. With numerous Illustrations.

**In the Land of the Moose, the Bear, and the Beaver.** Adventures in the Forests of the Athabasca. By ACHILLES DAUNT, Author of "The Three Trappers." With Illustrations.

**In the Bush and on the Trail.** Adventures in the Forests of North America. A Book for Boys. By M. BENEDICT REVOIL. With 70 Illustrations.

**The Lake Regions of Central Africa.** A Record of Modern Discovery. By JOHN GEDDIE, F.R.G.S. With 32 Illustrations.

**Lost in the Backwoods.** A Tale of the Canadian Forest. By Mrs. TRAILL, Author of "In the Forest," etc. With 32 Engravings.

**The Meadows Family ; or, Fireside Stories of Adventure and Enterprise.** By M. A. PAULL, Author of "Tim's Troubles," etc. With Illustrations.

**The Three Trappers.** A Book for Boys. By ACHILLES DAUNT, Author of "In the Land of the Moose, the Bear, and the Beaver." With 11 Engravings.

**Wrecked on a Reef ; or, Twenty Months in the Auckland Isles.** A True Story of Shipwreck, Adventure, and Suffering. With 40 Illustrations.

**Ralph's Year in Russia.** A Story of Travel and Adventure in Eastern Europe. By ROBERT RICHARDSON, Author of "Almost a Hero," etc. With 8 Engravings.

**Scenes with the Hunter and the Trapper in Many Lands.** Stories of Adventures with Wild Animals. With Engravings.

**The Forest, the Jungle, and the Prairie ; or, Tales of Adventure and Enterprise in Pursuit of Wild Animals.** With numerous Engravings.

**The Island Home ; or, The Young Castaways.** A Story of Adventure in the Southern Seas. With Illustrations.

# W. H. G. Kingston's Books for Boys.

**In the Eastern Seas; or, The Regions of the Bird of Paradise. A Tale for Boys.** With 111 Illustrations. Crown 8vo, gilt edges. Price 5s.

*A tale of voyage and adventure among the islands of the Malay Archipelago, with descriptions of scenery and objects of natural history.*

**In the Wilds of Africa.** With upwards of 70 Illustrations. Crown 8vo, gilt edges. Price 5s.

*An interesting account of adventures by a shipwrecked party who are landed on the west coast of Africa, and make their way to the south through many dangers.*

**On the Banks of the Amazon; or, A Boy's Journal of his Adventures in the Tropical Wilds of South America.** Profusely Illustrated. Crown 8vo, gilt edges. Price 5s.

*In the course of the narrative some of the numberless animals, as well as a few of the most interesting of the vegetable productions, of the Amazonian Valley are described.*

**Saved from the Sea; or, The Loss of the Viper, and the Adventures of her Crew in the Great Sahara.** With 30 Full-page Engravings. Crown 8vo, gilt edges. Price 5s.

*A young sailor's account of his own adventures, along with three shipwrecked comrades.*

**The South Sea Whaler.** A Story of the Loss of the *Champion*, and the Adventures of her Crew. With upwards of 30 Engravings. Crown 8vo, gilt edges. Price 5s.

*A tale of mutiny and shipwreck in the South Seas, the captain having his son and daughter on board with him.*

**In the Wilds of Florida.** With 37 Engravings. Crown 8vo, gilt edges. Price 5s.

*A tale of warfare and hunting.*

**Twice Lost.** With 36 Engravings. Crown 8vo, gilt edges. 5s.

*A young sailor's story of shipwreck, and perilous adventures in the wilds of Australia.*

**A Voyage Round the World. A Tale for Boys.** With 42 Engravings. Crown 8vo, gilt edges. Price 5s.

*A young sailor's account of his own adventures by sea and land, the scenes being laid chiefly in South America, the South Sea Islands, and Japan.*

**Old Jack.** A Sea Tale. With 66 Engravings. Crown 8vo, gilt edges. Price 5s.

*An old sailor's account of his own adventures, during times of peace and of war, in many parts of the world.*

**The Wanderers; or, Adventures in the Wilds of Trinidad and up the Orinoco.** With 30 Full-page Engravings. Crown 8vo, gilt edges. Price 5s.

*A Pennsylvanian merchant sets out with his family to South America, and meets with many adventures by sea and land, which are related by his son.*

**The Young Llanero.** A Story of War and Wild Life in Venezuela. With 44 Engravings. Crown 8vo, gilt edges. Price 5s.

*A thrilling and fascinating narrative of adventures in South America.*

**The Young Rajah.** A Story of Indian Life and Adventure. With upwards of 40 Full-page Engravings. Crown 8vo, gilt edges. 5s.

*A story of the Indian Mutiny; the hero a young Indian prince, who had received an English education and become a Christian.*

**My First Voyage to Southern Seas.** With 52 Engravings. Crown 8vo, gilt edges. Price 5s.

*A young sailor's story, describing Cape Colony, Ceylon, Aden, etc.*

\* \* \* Also to be had in uniform cloth binding as "The Kingston Library for Boys." Price 4s. per volume.

T. NELSON AND SONS, LONDON, EDINBURGH, AND NEW YORK.

## Travel and Adventure.

**Jack Hooper.** His Adventures at Sea and in South Africa. By VERNEY LOVETT CAMERON, C.B., D.C.L., Commander Royal Navy; Author of "Across Africa," etc. With 23 Full-page Illustrations. Price 4s., or with gilt edges, 5s.

*"Our author has the immense advantage over many writers of boys' stories that he describes what he has seen, and does not merely draw on his imagination and on books."*—SCOTSMAN.

**With Pack and Rifle in the Far South-West.** Adventures in New Mexico, Arizona, and Central America. By ACHILLES DAUNT, Author of "Frank Redcliffe," etc. With 30 Illustrations. 4s., or with gilt edges, 5s.

*A delightful book of travel and adventure, with much valuable information as to the geography and natural history of the wild American "Far West."*

**In Savage Africa ; or, The Adventures of Frank Baldwin from the Gold Coast to Zanzibar.** By VERNEY LOVETT CAMERON, C.B., D.C.L., Commander Royal Navy; Author of "Jack Hooper," etc. With 32 Illustrations. Crown 8vo, cloth extra, gilt edges. Price 4s., or with gilt edges, 5s.

**Early English Voyagers ; or, The Adventures and Discoveries of Drake, Cavendish, and Dampier.** Numerous Illustrations. Price 4s., or with gilt edges, 5s.

*The title of this work describes the contents. It is a handsome volume, which will be a valuable gift for young persons generally, and boys in particular. There are included many interesting illustrations and portraits of the three great voyagers.*

**Sandford and Merton.** A Book for the Young. By THOMAS DAY. Illustrated. Post 8vo, cloth extra. Price 2s. 6d.

**Our Sea-Coast Heroes ; or, Tales of Wreck and of Rescue by the Lifeboat and Rocket.** By ACHILLES DAUNT, Author of "Frank Redcliffe," etc. With numerous Illustrations. Price 2s. 6d.

**Robinson Crusoe.** The Life and Strange Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner. Written by Himself. *Carefully Reprinted from the Original Edition.* With Memoir of De Foe, a Memoir of Alexander Selkirk, and other interesting additions. Illustrated with upwards of Seventy Engravings by KEELEY HALSWELLE. Crown 8vo, cloth ex. 3s.

*An edition that every boy would be pleased to include in his library. It is handsomely bound, and the numerous illustrations assist greatly in the realization of this famous story.*

**The Swiss Family Robinson ; or, Adventures of a Father and his Four Sons on a Desolate Island.** Unabridged Translation. With 300 Illustrations. Price 3s.

*A capital edition of this well-known work. As the title suggests, its character is somewhat similar to that of the famous "Robinson Crusoe." It combines, in a high degree, the two desirable qualities in a book,—instruction and amusement.*

**Gulliver's Travels into Several Remote Regions of the World.** With Introduction and Explanatory Notes by the late Mr. ROBERT MACKENZIE, Author of "The 19th Century," "America," etc. With 20 Illustrations. Post 8vo, cloth extra. Price 3s.

*"A very handsome edition, under the editorship of Mr. Robert Mackenzie, who has supplied for it a well-written introduction and explanatory notes.... We have also here the curious original maps and a number of modern illustrations of much merit. Altogether this is a most attractive re-appearance of a famous book."*—GLASGOW HERALD.

# Library of Historical Tales.

**Dorothy Arden.** A Story of England and France Two Hundred Years Ago. By J. M. CALLWELL. Crown 8vo, cloth extra. Price 4s.

*A story of the dragonnades in France in the time of Louis XIV. Also of the persecutions in England under James II., the Monmouth rebellion, the Bloody Assize, and the Revolution.*

**How they Kept the Faith.** A Tale of the Huguenots of Languedoc. By GRACE RAYMOND. Crown 8vo, cloth extra. Price 4s.

*"No finer, more touchingly realistic, and truthfully accurate picture of the Languedoc Huguenots have we met."—*ABERDEEN FREE PRESS.

**The Lost Ring.** A Romance of Scottish History in the Days of King James and Andrew Melville. Crown 8vo, cloth extra. 4s.

*"The plot of the romance is skilfully constructed, the dialogue is admirable, and the principal actors in the history are portrayed with great ability."—*U.P. MISSIONARY RECORD.

**The City and the Castle.** A Story of the Reformation in Switzerland. By ANNIE LUCAS, Author of "Leonie," etc. Crown 8vo, cloth extra. Price 4s.

*Faithfully portrays the state and character of society at the time of the Reformation (in Switzerland).*

**Leonie ; or, Light out of Darkness : and Within Iron Walls,** a Tale of the Siege of Paris. Twin-Stories of the Franco-German War. By ANNIE LUCAS. Crown 8vo, cloth extra. Price 4s.

*Two tales, the first connected with the second. One, of country life in France during the war ; the other, life within the besieged capital.*

**Under the Southern Cross.** A Tale of the New World. By the Author of "The Spanish Brothers," etc. Crown 8vo, cl. ex. 4s.

*A thrilling and fascinating story.*

**Alison Walsh.** A Study of To-Day. By CONSTANCE EVELYN. Crown 8vo, cloth extra. Price 4s.

**La Rochelle ; or, The Refugees.** A Story of the Huguenots. By Mrs. E. C. WILSON. Crown 8vo, cloth extra. Price 4s.

**Wenzel's Inheritance ; or, Faithful unto Death.** A Tale of Bohemia in the Fifteenth Century. By ANNIE LUCAS. Crown 8vo, cloth extra. Price 4s.

*Presents a vivid picture of the religious and social condition of Bohemia in the fifteenth century.*

**Helena's Household.** A Tale of Rome in the First Century. With Frontispiece. Crown 8vo, cloth extra. Price 4s.

**The Spanish Brothers.** A Tale of the Sixteenth Century. By the Author of "The Dark Year of Dundee." Crown 8vo, cloth extra. Price 4s.

**The Czar.** A Tale of the Time of the First Napoleon. By the Author of "The Spanish Brothers," etc. Crown 8vo, cloth extra. Price 4s.

*An interesting tale of the great Franco-Russian war in 1812-13 ; the characters partly French, partly Russian.*

**Arthur Erskine's Story.** A Tale of the Days of Knox. By the Author of "The Spanish Brothers," etc. Crown 8vo, cloth extra. Price 4s.

*The object of the writer of this tale is to portray the life of the people in the days of Knox.*

**Pendower.** A Story of Cornwall in the Reign of Henry the Eighth. By M. FILLEUL. Crown 8vo, cloth extra. Price 4s.

*A tale illustrating in fiction that stirring period of English history previous to the Reformation.*

## Self-Effort Series.

---

**The Achievements of Youth.** By the Rev. ROBERT STEEL, D.D., Ph.D., Author of "Lives Made Sublime," "Doing Good," etc. Post 8vo, cloth extra. Price 3s. 6d.

**Famous Artists.** Michael Angelo—Leonardo da Vinci—Raphael—Titian—Murillo—Rubens—Rembrandt. By SARAH K. BOLTON. Post 8vo, cloth extra. 3s. 6d.

*Interesting biographies of Michael Angelo, Da Vinci, Raphael, Titian, Murillo, Rubens, and Rembrandt. The book also contains critical and other notices by Vasari, Passavant, Taine, Crowe and Cavalcaselle, etc., which are both interesting and instructive.*

**Doing Good ; or, The Christian in Walks of Usefulness.** Illustrated by Examples. By the Rev. R. STEEL, D.D. Post 8vo, cloth extra. Price 3s. 6d.

*A series of short biographical sketches of Christians remarkable for various kinds of usefulness, for example and encouragement to others.*

**General Grant's Life.** (From the Tannery to the White House.) Story of the Life of Ulysses S. Grant: his Boyhood, Youth, Manhood, Public and Private Life and Services. By WILLIAM M. THAYER, Author of "From Log Cabin to White House," etc. With Portrait, Vignette, etc. Reprinted complete from the American Edition. 400 pages. Crown 8vo, cloth extra, gilt side and edges. Price 3s. 6d. *Cheaper Edition, 2s. 6d.*

**Earnest Men: Their Life and Work.** By the late Rev. W. K. TWEEDIE, D.D. Post 8vo, cloth extra. Price 3s. 6d.

*Contains biographical sketches of eminent patriots, heroes for the truth, philanthropists, and men of science.*

**The Young Huguenots ; or, The Soldiers of the Cross.** A Story of the Seventeenth Century. By "FLEUR DE LYS." With Six Illustrations. Post 8vo, cloth extra. Price 3s. 6d.

**Heroes of the Desert.** The Story of the Lives of Moffat and Livingstone. By the Author of "Mary Powell." New and Enlarged Edition, with numerous Illustrations and two Portraits. Post 8vo, cloth extra. Price 3s. 6d.

*In this handsome new edition the story of Dr. Moffat is completed ; a sketch being given of the principal incidents in the last twenty years of his life.*

**Lives Made Sublime by Faith and Works.** By the Rev. R. STEEL, D.D., Author of "Doing Good," etc. Post 8vo, cloth extra. Price 3s. 6d.

*A volume of short biographical sketches of Christian men, eminent and useful in various walks of life,—as Hugh Miller, Sir Henry Havelock, Robert Flockhart, etc.*

**Noble Women of Our Time.** By JOSEPH JOHNSON, Author of "Living in Earnest," etc. With Accounts of the Work of Misses De Broën, Whately, Carpenter, F. R. Havergal, Macpherson, Sister Dora, etc. Post 8vo, cloth extra. Price 3s. 6d.

*A handsome volume, containing short biographies of many Christian women, whose lives have been devoted to missionary and philanthropic work—Sister Dora, Mrs. Tail, Frances Havergal, etc.*

**Self-Effort ; or, The True Method of Attaining Success in Life.** By JOSEPH JOHNSON, Author of "Living in Earnest," etc. Post 8vo, cloth extra. Price 3s. 6d.

*This book of example and encouragement has been written to induce earnestness in life, the illustrations being drawn from recent books of biography.*

# Works on Nature and Natural History.

---

**Chips from the Earth's Crust ;** or, Short Studies in Natural Science. By JOHN GIBSON, Natural History Department, Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art ; Author of "Science Gleanings in Many Fields," etc. With 29 Illustrations. Post 8vo, cloth extra. Price 2s. 6d.

*"A popular account of the Earth's surface and formation, such as may interest and instruct boys of an inquiring habit of mind. It comprises chapters on earthquakes, meteors, tornadoes, and other phenomena."*—SATURDAY REVIEW.

**Science Gleanings in Animal Life.** By JOHN GIBSON, Natural History Department, Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art. With 18 Illustrations. Post 8vo, cloth extra. Price 2s. 6d.

*The reader will find "Science Gleanings" rich in information regarding such interesting topics as animal intelligence, animal mimicry, the weapons of animals, their partnerships, and their migrations. Much information is also given regarding food fishes and about animals with which, whether as friends or foes, man has more especially to do.*

**Great Waterfalls, Cataracts, and Geysers.** Described and Illustrated. By JOHN GIBSON, Natural History Department, Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art ; Author of "Chips from the Earth's Crust," etc. With 32 Illustrations. Post 8vo, cloth extra. Price 2s. 6d.

**Earthquakes : Their History, Phenomena, and Probable Causes.** By MUNGO PONTON, F.R.S.E. New and Revised Edition, with an Account of Recent Earthquakes, by the Author of "Chips from the Earth's Crust," etc. Post 8vo, cloth extra. 2s.

**In the Polar Regions ;** or, Nature and Natural History in the Frozen Zones. With Anecdotes and Stories of Adventure and Travel. 46 Illustrations. Post 8vo, cloth extra. Price 2s. 6d.

**In the Tropical Regions ;** or, Nature and Natural History in the Torrid Zone. With Anecdotes and Stories of Adventure and Travel. 78 Illustrations. Post 8vo, cloth extra. 2s. 6d.

**In the Temperate Regions ;** or, Nature and Natural History in the Temperate Zones. With Anecdotes and Stories of Adventure and Travel. 72 Illustrations. Post 8vo, cloth extra. 2s. 6d.

*"In the Polar," "In the Tropical," and "In the Temperate Regions," are three companion volumes, though each is complete in itself. The full title suggests the character of the books. They are replete with information on the animal and vegetable life of the countries described, and abound in illustrations in elucidation of the text. Good books either for school or home libraries.*

**Gausson's World's Birthday.** Illustrated. Foolscep 8vo. 2s. 6d.

*Lectures delivered to an audience of young people, in Geneva, on the first chapter of Genesis. The discoveries of astronomical and geological science are simply explained, and harmonized with the statements of Scripture.*

**Nature's Wonders ;** or, How God's Works Praise Him. By the Rev. RICHARD NEWTON, D.D. With 53 Engravings. Post 8vo. 2s. 6d.

*Addresses to young persons, on various subjects of science and natural history, to show "how God's works praise him." With illustrative anecdotes and engravings.*

# Good Purpose Tales and Stories.

---

**What shall I be? or, A Boy's Aim in Life.** With Frontispiece and Vignette. Post 8vo, cloth extra. Price 2s.

*A tale for the young. The good results of good home example and training appearing in the end, after discipline and failings.*

**At the Black Rocks.** A Story for Boys. By the Rev. EDWARD A. RAND, Author of "Margie at the Harbour Light," etc. Post 8vo, cloth extra. Price 2s.

*A story the leading characters of which are two youths. One is always full of great schemes, which invariably end in smoke, and often bring their author into trouble and humiliation; while the other, a simple, unassuming lad, says little, but always does exactly what is needed, and earns general respect and confidence.*

**The Phantom Picture.** By the Hon. Mrs. GREENE, Author of "The Grey House on the Hill," "On Angels' Wings," etc. With Illustrations. Post 8vo, cloth extra. Price 2s.

*A story of two brothers and the misery brought upon both by one of them disobeying a command of their father. The innocent boy is for a while suspected and made unhappy in consequence; but at last truth prevails and all ends well.*

**Archie Digby; or, An Eton Boy's Holidays.** By G. E. W., Author of "Harry Bertram and his Eighth Birthday." Post 8vo, cl. ex. 2s.

*A very interesting tale for boys. The hero, a clever, thoughtless young Etonian, learns during a Christmas holiday time, by humbling experience, lessons full of value for all after life.*

**Rhoda's Reform; or, "Owe no Man Anything."** By M. A. PAULL, Author of "Tim's Troubles," "The Children's Tour," etc. Post 8vo, cloth extra. Price 2s.

**Martin's Inheritance; or, The Story of a Life's Chances.** A Temperance Tale. By E. VAN SOMMER, Author of "Lionel Franklin's Victory," "By Uphill Paths," etc. Post 8vo, cloth extra. Price 2s.

**True Riches; or, Wealth Without Wings.** By T. S. ARTHUR. Illustrated. Post 8vo, cloth extra. Price 2s.

*Teaches lessons such as cannot be learned too early by those who are engaged in the active and all-absorbing duties of life.*

**Culm Rock; or, Ready Work for Willing Hands.** A Book for Boys. By J. W. BRADLEY. Foolscap 8vo. With Engravings. 2s.

*It narrates the experiences and adventures of a boy compelled by circumstances to a hard life on a stern and stormy coast.*

**After Years.** A Story of Trials and Triumphs. By the Author of, and forming a Sequel to, "Culm Rock." With Illustrations. Foolscap 8vo, cloth extra. Price 2s.

*An American tale, the sequel to "Culm Rock," showing how well Noll Trafford, in after years, fulfilled the fair promise of his early boyhood.*

**Conquest and Self-Conquest; or, Which Makes the Hero?** Foolscap 8vo. Price 2s.

*A tale very suitable for a lad under fifteen. It teaches the important lesson that the greatest of victories is the victory gained over self.*

**Home Principles in Boyhood.** Foolscap 8vo, cloth extra. 2s.

*The story of a lad who, in spite of apparent self-interest to the contrary, held firmly to the principles in which he had been instructed by Christian parents.*

# Library of Tales and Stories.

---

**Thankful Rest.** A Tale. By AN-  
NIE S. SWAN, Author of "Alder-  
syde," "Carlowrie," "Shadowed  
Lives," etc. Large foolscap 8vo,  
cloth extra. Price 1s. 6d.

*An interesting story for young people. The scene an American township and farmstead; the principal characters an orphan brother and sister, with the relatives who ungraciously give them a home in "Thankful Rest."*

**Willie's Choice;** or, All is not  
Gold that Glitters. By M. A.  
PAULL. Foolscap 8vo. 1s. 6d.

*A tale for young people, of life-lessons and experience dearly bought.*

**The Blind Girl;** or, The Story of  
Little Vendla. By the Author  
of "The Swedish Twins," etc.  
Cloth extra. Price 1s. 6d.

*A charming Swedish story, describing domestic life, with its usual vicissitudes, in a Swedish rural parsonage.*

**The Adventures of Mark Willis.**  
By Mrs. GEORGE CUPPLES, Au-  
thor of "The Little Captain,"  
etc. With 45 Engravings. Royal  
18mo. Price 1s. 6d.

*A young sailor's story of adventures on the West Coast of Africa, in China, etc.*

**The Boy Artist.** A Tale. By  
the Author of "Hope On." With  
Coloured Frontispiece and numer-  
ous Engravings. Foolscap 8vo.  
Price 1s. 6d.

*The trials and success at last of a youthful artist.*

**Tempered Steel;** or, Tried in the  
Fire. By the Rev. E. N. HOARE,  
M.A., Author of "Roe Carson's  
Enemy," etc. Foolscap 8vo.  
Price 1s. 6d.

*"A well-written story, with a good purpose. It is likely to impress the reader at once with the earnestness of the writer, and with a sense of his ability."—SCOTSMAN.*

**Brother Reginald's Golden Se-  
cret.** By the Author of "Hope  
On," etc. With Coloured Fron-  
tispiece and Vignette, and numer-  
ous Engravings. Royal 18mo.  
Price 1s. 6d.

*A Christmas tale for children,—the best way of securing a truly happy Christmas.*

**Master Travers.** By FLORENCE  
M. STORY, Author of "Georgie  
Merton," etc. Post 8vo, cloth  
extra. Price 1s. 6d.

**Jack and his Ostrich.** An African  
Story. By ELEANOR STREDDER.  
Post 8vo, cloth extra. 1s. 6d.

**Emily Herbert;** or, The Happy  
Home. By MARIA M'INTOSH,  
Author of "Praise and Principle,"  
etc. Royal 18mo. Price 1s. 6d.

*A story of family life, inculcating the lesson that a cheerful performance of the duties assigned to us makes a home happy.*

**Father's Coming Home.** A Tale.  
By the Author of "Under the  
Microscope." Royal 18mo. Price  
1s. 6d.

*A family preparing for their father's return from India, by seeking to please him by improvement in character and conduct; and the various incidents which help or hinder them.*

**Under the Microscope;** or, "Thou  
Shalt Call Me My Father." By  
the Author of "Village Mission-  
aries." With Coloured Frontis-  
piece and 17 Engravings. Royal  
18mo. Price 1s. 6d.

*"Our Father which art in heaven," read by children in photographic letters under the microscope; and the lesson of divine love giving comfort afterwards under the trials of daily life.*







